

THE Atlantic

FEBRUARY 2001

MONTHLY

THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES

*Thoughts
from fourteen
contributors on
Bill Clinton and
his consequences*

WWW.THEATLANTIC.COM

#BXBDGG*****CAR-RT SORT**C-003

#AMY0004549408/4#

4B 60

JAN06 7124

2

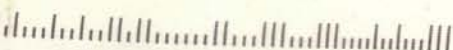
91500

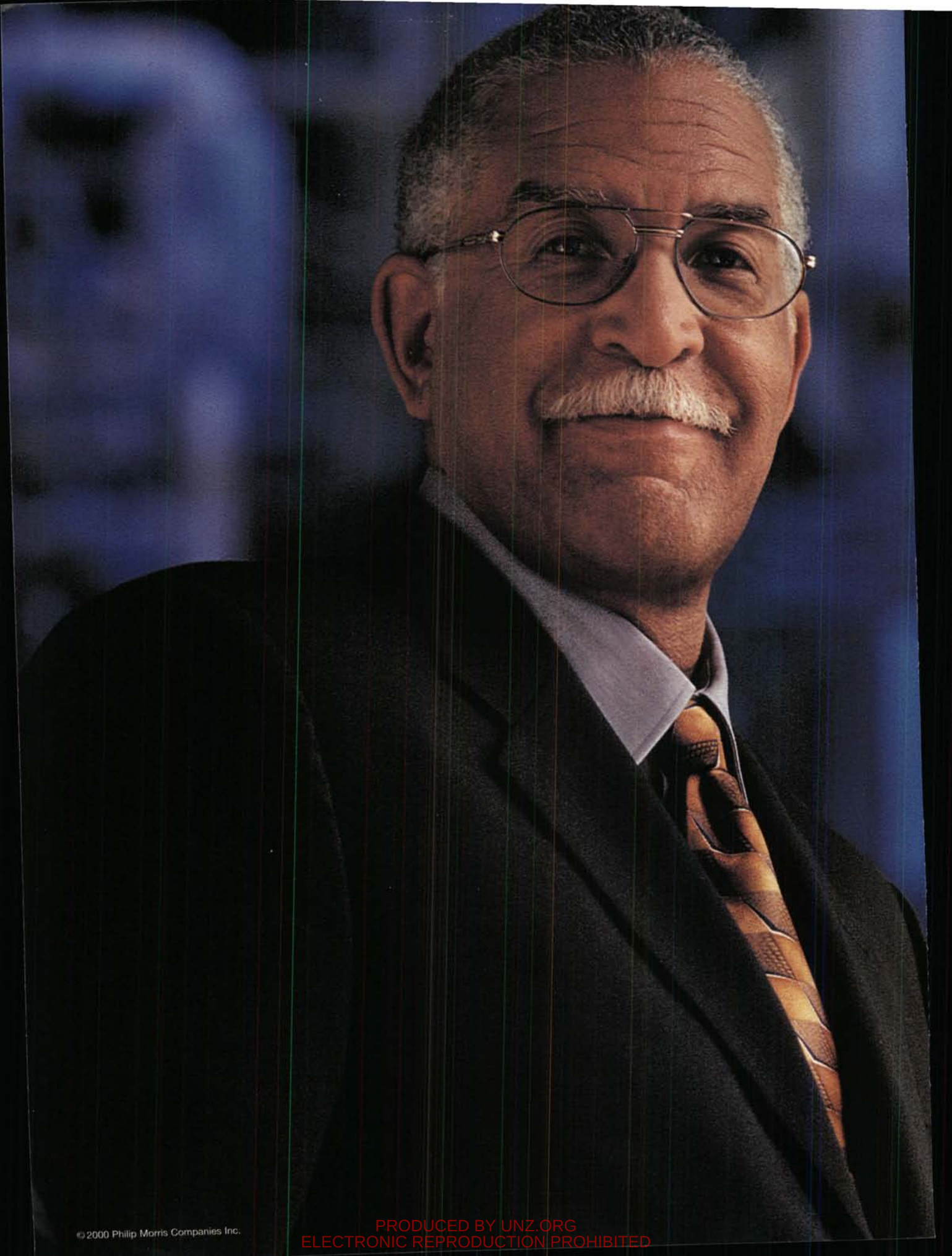
RON K UNZ

555 BRYANT ST 371

ALO ALTO CA 94301-1704

012424





George's future is sealed.

That's because George Hill is the President and CEO of Adhesive Systems, Inc., the company which manufactures the glue that seals the packaging for many of our popular brands. The Philip Morris Companies made a great choice working with George's company. In fact, through our Supplier Diversity Program, Philip Morris has benefited from strong partnerships with minority-owned businesses for over twenty years. Last year alone, over one billion dollars of our business went to our minority and women-owned partners. To learn more about how our Supplier Diversity Program is helping to strengthen communities, visit philipmorris.com.

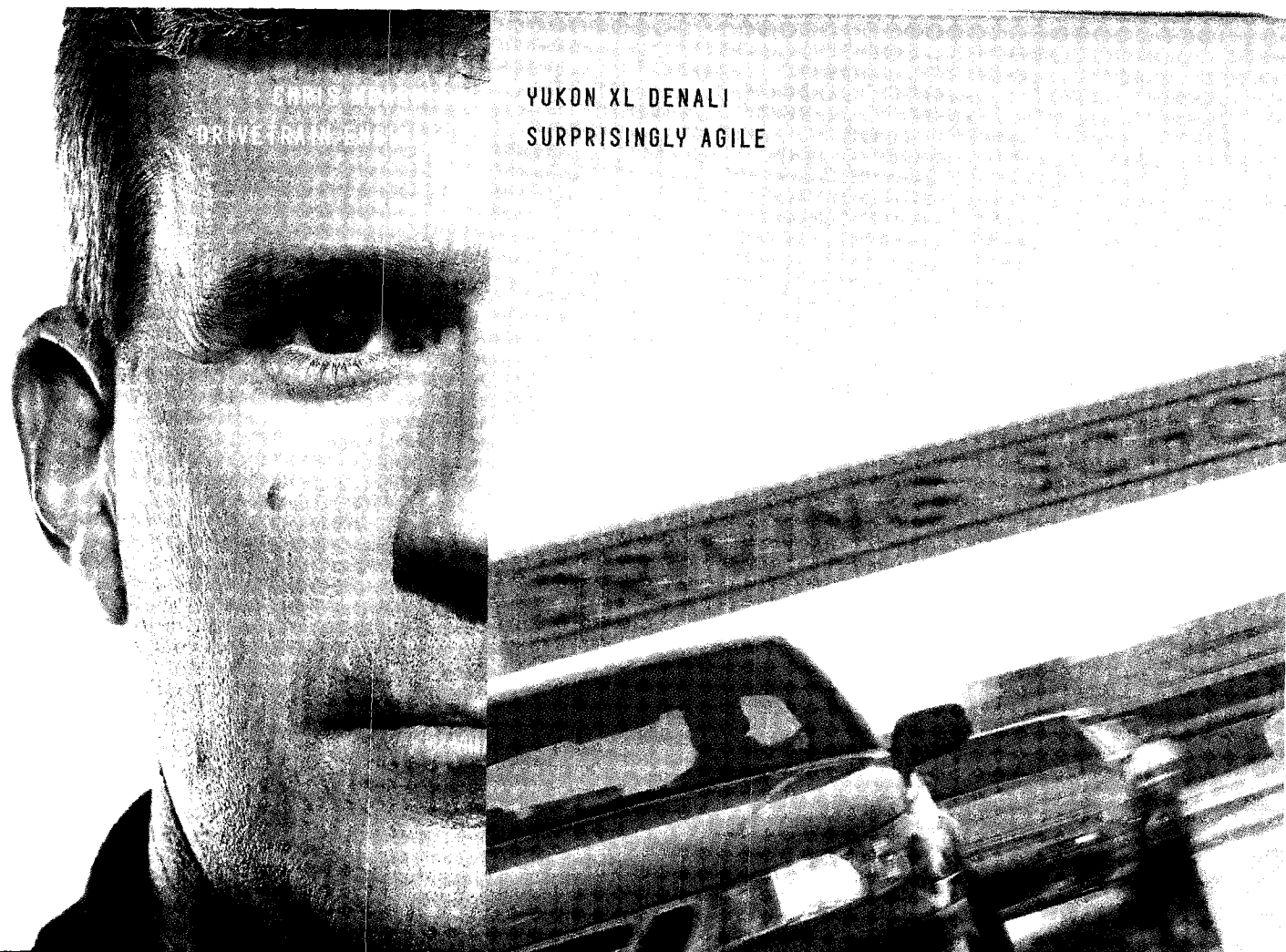
Working to make a difference.

THE PEOPLE OF THE PHILIP MORRIS COMPANIES



PHILIP
MORRIS
U.S.A.





CHRIS MEAGHER
DRIVE TRAIN

YUKON XL DENALI
SURPRISINGLY AGILE

CHRIS MEAGHER TAUGHT THE BIG DOG
SOME NEW TRICKS.

INTRODUCING THE ALL-NEW YUKON XL DENALI.

P
U
L
L
I
N
G
A
G
I
L
I
T
Y

FULL-TIME
ALL-WHEEL DRIVE.

THE YUKON XL DENALI IS A WHOLE NEW BREED—THE FIRST AND ONLY FULL-SIZE SUV WITH FULL-TIME AWD. PULL INTO A TIGHT PARKING SPOT WITH THIS 8-SEATER OR MERGE INTO THE FAST LANE, AND YOU'LL MOVE WITH AGILITY THAT ASTONISHES.

320 HP VORTEC™
V8 ENGINE.

CHRIS AND THE TEAM WANTED YOU TO SURGE INTO THAT AGILITY. SO THEY TURNED TO THE BIG VORTEC™ WITH ITS 365 LB-FT OF TORQUE. WHEN THE BIG DOG HEADS OUT, IT'S THE ROAD THAT LEARNS TO OBEY.

FROM PROFESSIONAL GRADE PEOPLE
COME PROFESSIONAL GRADE SUVS.

WE ARE PROFESSIONAL GRADE.™

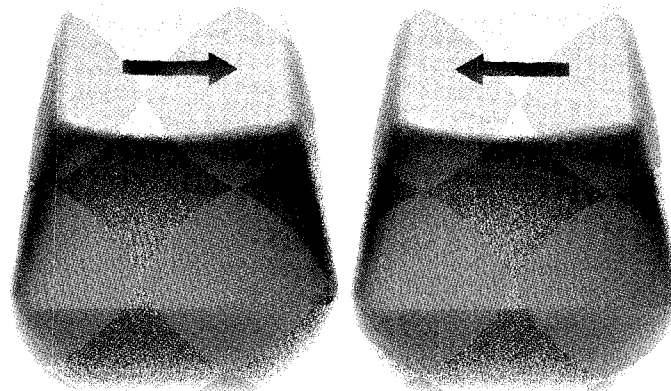
1 888 - GMC DENALI DR GMC.COM/DENALI



Yukon, Denali and GMC logo are registered trademarks of General Motors Corporation.
©2007 General Motors Corp. All rights reserved.

GMC

YUKON XL DENALI



Where low insurance rates and exceptional service come together.

With the American Express Property Casualty companies, you can save up to 20% on your insurance premiums and get superior service, too. We offer a full range of insurance products, including auto, home and umbrella policies. We'll help you choose the coverage, deductibles, and payment terms to meet your needs. And with 24-hour service by phone or over the Web, we're always available to provide rate quotes, answer questions or assist with claims. Protect your assets with insurance from the American Express Property Casualty companies. We help you do more.

online trading

advice & planning

insurance

1-800-842-3344 americanexpress.com



Property/casualty insurance is underwritten by AMEX Assurance Company or IDS Property Casualty Insurance Company, both in Green Bay, Wisconsin. American Express Financial Advisors Inc. Member NASD and SIPC. American Express Company is separate from American Express Financial Advisors Inc. and is not a broker-dealer. ©2000 American Express Financial Corporation. All rights reserved.



THE Atlantic

VOLUME 287 NO. 2 / FEBRUARY 2001

- 6** 77 NORTH WASHINGTON STREET *by Michael Kelly*
10 IN THIS ISSUE
16 LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
22 INNOCENT BYSTANDER: COMMON STOCK *by Cullen Murphy*

NOTES & DISPATCHES

- 32** Reports from our correspondents in Washington, Yakutsk, London, Belgrade, and Columbus, Ohio
-

45 BILL CLINTON AND HIS CONSEQUENCES

Contributions from James Fallows, P.J. O'Rourke, Pat Oliphant, Randall Kennedy, Francis Davis, Margaret Talbot, Glenn C. Loury, Roy Blount Jr., Carl M. Cannon, Wilfrid Sheed, Arlie Russell Hochschild, Tish Durkin, William Schneider, and Jack Beatty

71 THE BANDIT KING AND THE MOVIE STAR

Why did one of India's most colorful and ruthless terrorists kidnap one of India's most beloved actors? *by Abraham Verghese*

79 SHOCK AND DISBELIEF

Electroconvulsive therapy is safe and effective. An unusual assortment of activist groups is striving to suppress that message *by Daniel Smith*

92 WALKING TOUR

A guide to the byways of a mythical place you've probably been to *by Ian Frazier*

84 BELLES LETTRES *A poem by Terese Svoboda*

91 TWO LOVE POEMS *by Wislawa Szymborska, translated by Joanna Trzeciak*

96 SISTER GODZILLA *A short story by Louise Erdrich*

.....

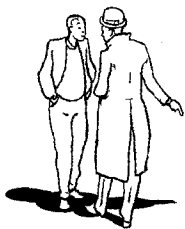
PURSUIITS & RETREATS

- 100** TRAVEL: LAS VEGAS, 'TIS OF THEE *by Richard Todd*
105 GARDENS: IT'S A BUG-EAT-BUG WORLD *by Thomas C. Cooper*
108 SPORT: SOVEREIGNS OF THE SKY *by Stephen Bodio*

BOOKS & CRITICS

- 112** THE WEDDING MERCHANTS Books on weddings *reviewed by Caitlin Flanagan*
119 "THE FIRST HIP WHITE PERSON" Bing Crosby: A Pocketful of Dreams—The Early Years, 1903–1940, by Gary Giddins *reviewed by James Marcus*
124 OFF ITS ROCKER Aiding and Abetting, by Muriel Spark *reviewed by Thomas Mallon*
125 NEW & NOTEWORTHY: The Library of America's Longfellow; essays on the historian Eugene D. Genovese; and novels by Julian Barnes, John Banville, Stewart O'Nan, and Amitav Ghosh
128 A MAVERICK HISTORIAN The Sword of Honour trilogy, by Evelyn Waugh *reviewed by Penelope Lively*
131 THE PUZZLER *by Emily Cox and Henry Rathvon*
132 WORD FUGITIVES *by Barbara Wallraff*

Cover art by Bill Nelson; heading drawings throughout by Istvan Banyai



77 NORTH WASHINGTON STREET

The first issue of *The Atlantic Monthly* came into subscribers' hands in November of 1857, and it can fairly be said that the cover did not scream for attention. On it was a small centered image of John Winthrop, the founder of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, inside a simple decorative border, and a total of twenty-three words and four numbers. None of the words shilled for the magazine's contents. They and the numbers were there only because each of them had to be there to convey the basic facts of *The Atlantic's* existence: title, date, issue number, price ("25 cents"), the names of the publishers in Boston and London, the location of the Boston offices, and a declaration of purpose: "Devoted to Literature, Art, and Politics."

That declaration was intended not only to signal which subjects *The Atlantic's* editors would address but also to rank those subjects in order of priority. Literature—words—came first. (That issue featured work by Ralph Waldo Emerson, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.) By "Art" the editors meant not pictures but words about pictures, and about other forms of nonword art. By "Politics" the editors meant the large questions of the national life and conversation: in other words, what is going on in the American experiment? These questions are ultimately about ideas, as conveyed through words.

So the editors of *The Atlantic* designed a magazine in which words ruled absolutely—words arranged logically, precisely, formally. As the years went on, images were tolerated, barely, as long as they knew their place; it was a small and spare place. The first "modern" cover, with words subordinated to a large image, did not appear until November, 1947, the ninetieth-anniversary issue. The image was one of Neptune and a unicorn, a variation on what remains to this day the magazine's colophon.

Since that radical day in 1947 *The Atlantic* has almost always had some sort of image on its cover—and the magazine has increasingly come to see itself, and to be seen by others,

as a home for the best in graphic creativity. Under Judy Carlan, who last November ended a career of nearly two decades as its art director, *The Atlantic* became as ambitious visually as it had always been in writing and reporting. It won some 400 illustration and design awards under Carlan's inspired art direction, and it published work by many of the finest illustrators and photographers in the world.

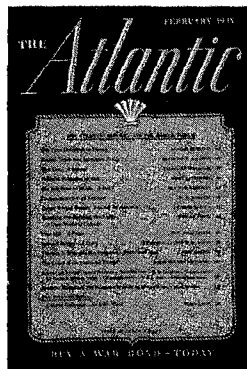
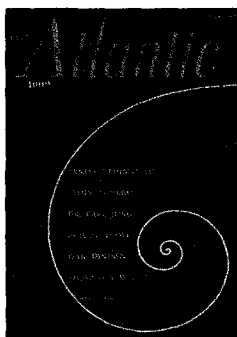
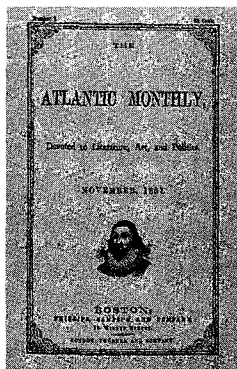
This month we introduce a new design. To some degree we seek to return to our roots—to build a magazine that showcases and enhances the written word. Everything has been done with the aim of making the magazine more navigable, more pleasing to the eye, more visually coherent—and therefore easier to read. The design was created by our new art director, Mary Parsons, with assistance from Dominica Pontrello.

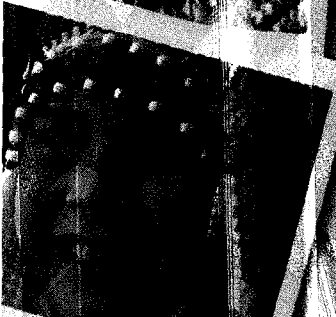
Aesthetically there are some obvious changes. This issue is printed on a heavier, better-quality paper than we have used for years. We have a new logo, and we have changed typefaces throughout the magazine, adopting an elegant and accessible version of Bodoni for the text.

The structure of the magazine is also considerably different. The front has been reorganized as Notes & Dispatches, and it features relatively brief datelined articles from around the world. Some of them will be news, some of them will be small stories from here and

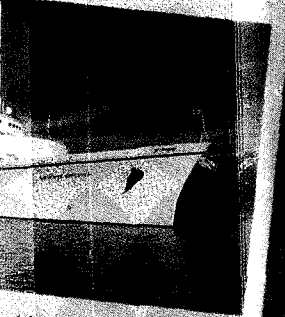
there, and some will be amusing. Also in the front we have revived *Innocent Bystander*, a column written in the early 1970s by the poet and essayist L. E. Sissman, a longtime contributor to these pages. The back of the magazine is now divided into two sections, Pursuits & Retreats and Books & Critics. The first will present shorter pieces on subjects such as travel, design, gardens, food, and sport. The second will devote far more attention than previously to books and literary life, and will also cover music, movies, and television.

These changes in design will, we hope, complement *The Atlantic's* enduring functions: to inform, to surprise, to entertain. —MICHAEL KELLY





Young Grace



Universe Explorer

...st!
 ... Herbert Glacier
 ... flight!
 ... pop 450
 The only Indian reservation
 in Alaska
 met young Grace
 mutual birthdays
 Sunset 11:32 p.m!
 Latitude
 58 degrees
 28 min North
 Longitude
 136 degrees
 00 min West

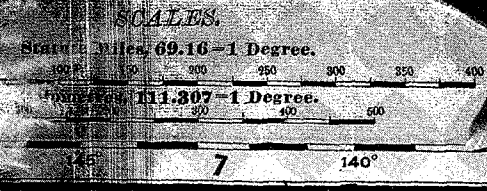
Robert Service sure
 got it right...
 "The lonely sunsets
 flame and die;
 The giant valleys
 gulp the night;
 The monster mountains
 scrape the sky,
 where eager stars are
 diamond-bright."



Sam and Roman
totem pole
at Sapsman Village
Faces on Roman's
wings - power to
change form.

WORLD EXPLORER CRUISES
 Voyages of discovery, learning, and adventure since 1978.

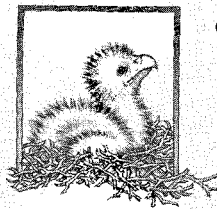
MAP OF ALASKA.



Casual, educational 14-night Alaska cruises from \$1995*, 2nd person HALF OFF,
 port fees included, no single surcharge. Contact your travel agent or
 World Explorer Cruises for a free brochure 800-325-2752 www.wecruise.com *Certain restrictions apply

Coming In For A Safe Landing.

Their wings may span six feet. Bringing
bald eagles grace and majesty, but also



danger. And that's
because the place an
eagle decides to land

might be a high-voltage power line.

So people working in Wyoming built
special platforms on top of power poles.

Helping this threatened species land
safely. And soar to new heights.



People Do.

www.peopledo.com





IN THIS ISSUE

In this month's cover feature, "Bill Clinton and His Consequences," fourteen contributors look back on the Clinton presidency.

The saga of the kidnapping of the beloved Indian actor Rajkumar by the infamous bandit Veerappan transfixed southern India (and much of the rest of the world) for more than three months before the actor was released, last November. The author and physician **Abraham Verghese** ("The Bandit King and the Movie Star") returned to India, where he was educated, to report on the drama as it unfolded. Verghese is the author of the memoirs *My Own Country: A Doctor's Story* (1994) and *The Tennis Partner* (1998).

In a review of the book *Family* (1994), by **Ian Frazier**, *The New York Times* commended the author for the "antic sense of fun he brings to whatever he writes." This month Frazier, in "Walking Tour," guides us through the familiar streets of a city that's nowhere to be found. Frazier's books include *Great Plains* (1989) and *Coyote v. Acme* (1996), for which he won the inaugural Thurber Prize for American Humor. Our December, 1999, cover story was taken from his book *On the Rez* (2000).

Electroconvulsive therapy is perhaps the most controversial and misunderstood treatment in psychiatry, despite its effectiveness in treating a number of mental illnesses. In his first article for the magazine, the *Atlantic* staff editor **Daniel Smith** ("Shock and Disbelief") looks at the science of ECT and reports on the efforts of an unlikely trio of activist groups (including an outgrowth of the Church of Scientology) to ban the procedure outright.

Louise Erdrich ("Sister Godzilla") won the National Book Critics Circle Award

in 1984 for *Love Medicine*. Her novel *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse* will be published in April.

Wisława Szymborska received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1996. Her poems in this issue, "Openness" and "Commemoration," will appear in *Miracle Fair*, a collection of Szymborska's poetry, translated by **Joanna Trzeciak**, to be published in April.

As cycles of building and demolition accelerate nationwide, it is growing increasingly difficult to preserve the past—and to decide what's worth saving. In a dispatch from Columbus, Ohio, **Wayne Curtis** ("The Tiki Wars") reports on the battle to save a kitsch artifact: the only tiki restaurant listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Also this month: **Peter Maass**, from Belgrade, on what new problems the post-Milosevic era may pose for the writers of Serbia; **Francis X. Rocca**, from London, on shopping for aristocratic titles; **Richard Rubin**, from Washington, D.C., on the 1.5 million square miles of territory the United States seems to have misplaced; and **Jeffrey Tayler**, from Yakutsk, on the true meaning of "economy class" air travel.

Stephen Bodio ("Sovereigns of the Sky") traveled to the high valleys of Central Asia to hunt by means of trained eagles in the company of Kazakh tribesmen. Bodio, a falconer, is the author of numerous books, including *On the Edge of the Wild* (1998).

Fears of contamination and pesticide-resistant bugs are leading many gardeners to shun conventional pesticides and turn to insects for help. **Thomas C. Cooper** ("It's a Bug-Eat-Bug World") profiles Mike Cherim, the owner of The Green Spot, a biocontrol-supply company in New Hampshire. Cooper re-

cently left his post as editor in chief of *Horticulture*, where he spent twenty-three years, to launch the new magazine *The Gardener*, which will make its debut this spring.

Richard Todd, a former executive editor of *The Atlantic*, is at work on a book about the search for authenticity in contemporary American life—an endeavor that, perhaps counterintuitively, inspired his recent visit to Las Vegas ("Las Vegas, 'Tis of Thee"). Todd finds that the city deserves the one thing Americans tend to deny it: respect.

Before World War II most American weddings were modest affairs. More recently the "white wedding" has grown into an extravaganza fueling a \$70 billion industry. **Caidin Flanagan** ("The Wedding Merchants") surveys the recent bumper crop of wedding-etiquette and -survival guides.

Evelyn Waugh is celebrated for his trenchant satires and the elegiac *Brideshead Revisited*. Far less well known is the *Sword of Honour* trilogy, even though many consider it to be Waugh's masterpiece. On the occasion of its reissue, the novelist **Penelope Lively** ("A Maverick Historian") takes a second look. Lively was the winner of the 1987 Booker Prize for her novel *Moon Tiger*. Her most recent novel is *Spiderweb* (1999).

Hardly the square that he has come to represent, Bing Crosby was the first major entertainer to achieve the blend of black and white aesthetics that underlies much of American pop culture. So argues Gary Giddins in his new biography of Crosby, reviewed in this issue by **James Marcus** ("The First Hip White Person"). A critic, a translator, and a novelist, Marcus is currently the literature and fiction editor at Amazon.com books.

America's seniors must have prescription drug coverage

by Alan F. Holmer

In pharmaceutical company laboratories all across the country, dedicated researchers are tackling the tough diseases of aging—and getting closer to solving the mysteries of Alzheimer's, Parkinson's disease, arthritis, cancer and other diseases. Pharmaceutical companies have more than 600 medicines for diseases of aging in the pipeline, and research on the human genome is creating new opportunities to discover and develop even more and better medicines.

But unless all seniors can enjoy the fruits of this research, it will have less value—to society as well as to the companies that are investing billions of dollars each year to discover new medicines for the diseases of aging. That's why the pharmaceutical industry supports expanding drug coverage for America's seniors. Seniors need medicines the most, and it makes no sense to deprive them of medicines that would not only help them feel better but, in many cases, save money by helping them avoid expensive surgery, hospitalization or nursing home stays.

We want all seniors to have timely, hassle-free access to the medicines our companies discover and develop. Seniors should be able to choose the coverage plan that works best for them—just as 150 million Americans, including federal employees and members of Congress, do now. In that way, seniors—and seniors to be—will benefit from all the lifesaving and life-enhancing medicines now in the pipeline. And pharmaceutical companies will be able to keep making old age better, building on the

progress that's already been made.

Life expectancy has increased more than 10 percent in the past three decades, and seniors are living longer and better lives. Disability rates among the elderly are falling—thanks, in large part, to better drug treatments. Most older people are not severely limited in their daily activities, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. While 12 percent of seniors report being in poor health, 44 percent say they are now living “the best years of their lives.”

But the diseases of aging still take a grim toll. Some four million Americans now have Alzheimer's disease, and 14 million will have this disease by mid-century—unless a treatment, cure or prevention is found. Someone suffers a stroke in the U.S. every 53 seconds, and one-third of stroke survivors remain permanently disabled. By 2020, nearly 60 million Americans—one out of five people—are likely to have some form of arthritis. Continued—and stepped up—pharmaceutical company research is our best hope of reducing this toll.

So, as we modernize Medicare to make sure today's seniors have access to the medicines their doctors prescribe, we also have to ensure that the river of pharmaceutical innovation keeps flowing. A Medicare drug benefit that relies on government regulation—rather than competition and choice—to improve quality and control costs could slow research, forcing companies to put some promising research on the back burner. That could mean that people who might have been starting second careers if we had encouraged research would, instead, enter nursing homes.



If we encourage research, the picture is rosier. According to Daniel Perry, head of the Alliance for Aging Research, a robust climate for research could mean that by 2050:

- Alzheimer's disease could be nearly eliminated
- Osteoporosis could be “a thing of the past”
- Cancer could be a manageable, chronic disease.

When Medicare began, in 1965, prescription medicines didn't play anywhere near the important role they play today or the preeminent role they will play in the future. Medicare didn't—and still doesn't—cover most outpatient medicines. This lack of coverage creates hardships for many older Americans, and must be corrected. The need is urgent, and the time to act is now. We must proceed immediately, and with full knowledge of what's at stake—for today's seniors and for generations to come.

For more information on prescription drug coverage, please go to www.phrma.org.

Alan F. Holmer is President of the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, which represents the country's leading research-based pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies.

America's Pharmaceutical Companies

Leading the way in the search for cures

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Each month THE ATLANTIC ONLINE offers the contents of *The Atlantic's* print edition—with Web-only sidebars, related articles from *The Atlantic's* archive, and links to other Web sites—alongside a weekly update of original Web-only features in *Atlantic Unbound*, our online journal.

This month on the Web...

Interview

Louise Erdrich

The author of *The Atlantic's* February short story ("Sister Godzilla")—and of *Love Medicine*, *Tales of Burning Love*, and other novels—discusses her forthcoming book, *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*.

Fallows@large

E-mail Dialogues with James Fallows

In a new online column *The Atlantic's* national correspondent engages the authors of new books on politics, technology, and the media. This month Fallows hosts Joseph J. Ellis, the author of *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation*.

Digital Reader

Literary Culture in the Digital Age

A new monthly column by Ralph Lombreglia—a noted fiction writer and pioneering multimedia producer—considers the impact of technology on what and how we read. This month: Lombreglia on Jason Epstein's *Book Business* and the future of literary publishing.

...and much more.

Come see why THE ATLANTIC ONLINE is a three-time finalist for the National Magazine Award for General Excellence in New Media, and why *Forbes* magazine named it the best literary site on the Web for 2000.

THE Atlantic
online

WWW.THEATLANTIC.COM

THE Atlantic

Editor
MICHAEL KELLY

Managing Editor
CULLEN MURPHY

Deputy Managing Editor
MARTHA SPAULDING

Senior Editors
JACK BEATTY, C. MICHAEL CURTIS,
CORBY KUMMER, AMY MEEKER, BENJAMIN SCHWARZ,
ROBERT VARE, BARBARA WALLRAFF

Art Director
MARY PARSONS

National Correspondent
JAMES FALLOWS

Associate Editors
PETER DAVISON (poetry),
SUE PARILLA, YVONNE ROLZHAUSEN

Staff Editors
LESLIE CAULDWELL, AVRIL CORNEL,
KATHRYN FRAUNFELDER, JOSHUA FRIEDMAN,
GINA HAHN, BENJAMIN HEALY,
HILARY MCCLELLAN, JESSICA MURPHY,
LUCIE PRINZ, DANIEL SMITH, JON ZOENICA

Art Staff
DOMINICA PONTRELLO, Associate Art Director
GILLIAN KAHN, Art Assistant
GABRIELA HERNANDEZ, Designer

The Atlantic Online
WEN STEPHENSON, Editorial Director
ERIC WESTBY, Director of Design & Production
KATIE BACON, Executive Editor
DAVID BARBER, Literary Editor
SAGE STOSSEL, Senior Editor
KATHERINE GUCKENBERGER, Fiction Editor
JESSICA CHAPEL, Production Manager

Editorial Administration
MICHAEL KUBIT,
ROBERT MOELLER, MURIEL MONTEIRO

Information Technology
DAVID STRECKER

Correspondents
STEPHEN BUDIANSKY, ROBERT D. KAPLAN,
WILLIAM LANGEWIESCHE, CHARLES C. MANN,
ERIC SCHLOSSER, ELLEN RUPPEL SHELL

Contributing Editors
ROY BLOUNT JR., FRANCIS DAVIS,
GREGG EASTERBROOK, SEYMOUR M. HERSH,
WENDY KAMINER, TRACY KIDDER,
JAMES ALAN MCPHERSON, JACK MILES,
CONOR CRUISE O'BRIEN, THOMAS POWERS,
WILLIAM SCHNEIDER

Editor Emeritus
WILLIAM WHITWORTH

Submissions & Correspondence
The Atlantic Monthly considers unsolicited manuscripts,
fiction or nonfiction, and mail for the Letters column.
Correspondence should be sent to

The Atlantic Monthly
77 North Washington Street
Boston, MA 02114
(617) 854-7700

or Letters@theatlantic.com

Manuscripts will not be returned, nor will queries be answered,
unless they are accompanied by a postage-paid return envelope
of sufficient size. Please do not send manuscripts by e-mail.

Chairman
DAVID G. BRADLEY

President and Group Publisher
JOHN FOX SULLIVAN

Senior Vice President
STEVE HULL

Publisher
DONNA PALMER

Advertising
MATTHEW BARBA, Associate Publisher

New York: (646) 695-8500
JOANNE STEINBERG, Development Director
GLORIA A. BRIERE, JENNIFER HOADLEY,
JENNIFER IZZO, KATHERINE KOLENDO,
HEATHER ROSEBERRY,
FRAZIER RUGG, Managers
KATHERINE HAZLETON, JULIE ZUCKERBERG, Assistants

Chicago: (312) 604-0350
Christopher Schuba & Company
STEVE PESZEK, Manager

Detroit: (248) 691-1800
Hour Media/JOHN BALARDO
LISA STEELE, Manager

Los Angeles: (310) 479-4729
BRIAN PATELLA, Manager
DESIREE GILL, Assistant

Washington: (202) 266-6000
EMILY AKHTARZANDI, JOCELYN BATKO,
SARA ZYSKOWSKI, Managers
JAMIE HECHINGER, Sales and Project Associate

Marketing
NANCY BEUSCHEL, TASHA HICKS, KELLY OWENS
KEN YANHS (The Atlantic Online)

Circulation
ADAM R. COHEN, Circulation Director
PAUL UINGLAUB
Circulation Specialists, Inc.

Production & Special Projects
JAN MORRIS, Director
JODI FISHER, JOHN KEFFERSTAN, AMY SWAN

Finance
TONY SKARUPA, Vice President/CFO
DEBRA CARRIERE, Director of Finance
SOPHIE LECAM-CAMILIEN, Accounting Manager
PATRICIA HALL, ANDREW WALL

Publisher's Offices
The Atlantic Monthly
200 Madison Avenue, 20th Floor
New York, NY 10016
(646) 695-8500

Subscriptions
Please direct all subscription
queries and orders to

Atlantic Customer Care
Box 37585
Boone, IA 50037-0585
or call (800) 234-2411

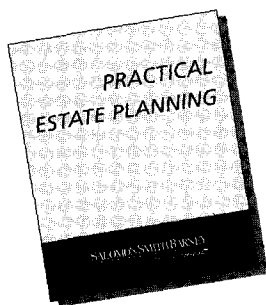
Reprints
Reprint requests (100+) should be made to
Reprint Management Services
(717) 399-1900

Education Program
A discount rate and free support materials are available
to teachers who use *The Atlantic* in the classroom.
Please call (877) 299-8577 or visit www.theatlantic.com/teach/

FEBRUARY 2001

IMAGINE EVERYTHING YOU WANT TO PASS ON TO YOUR FAMILY. NOW IMAGINE 2/3 LESS.

SEE HOW A SIMPLE WILL ISN'T ENOUGH.



- Estate taxes could cost you up to 70% of your hard-earned wealth
- Discover 10 strategies to help preserve your assets, including the best way to own life insurance
- See why the stock market gains of the 90's make it important to consider estate planning now

Call 1-800-EARNS IT, ext 1564
1-800-327-6748, ext 1564
for your free copy of "Practical Estate Planning."

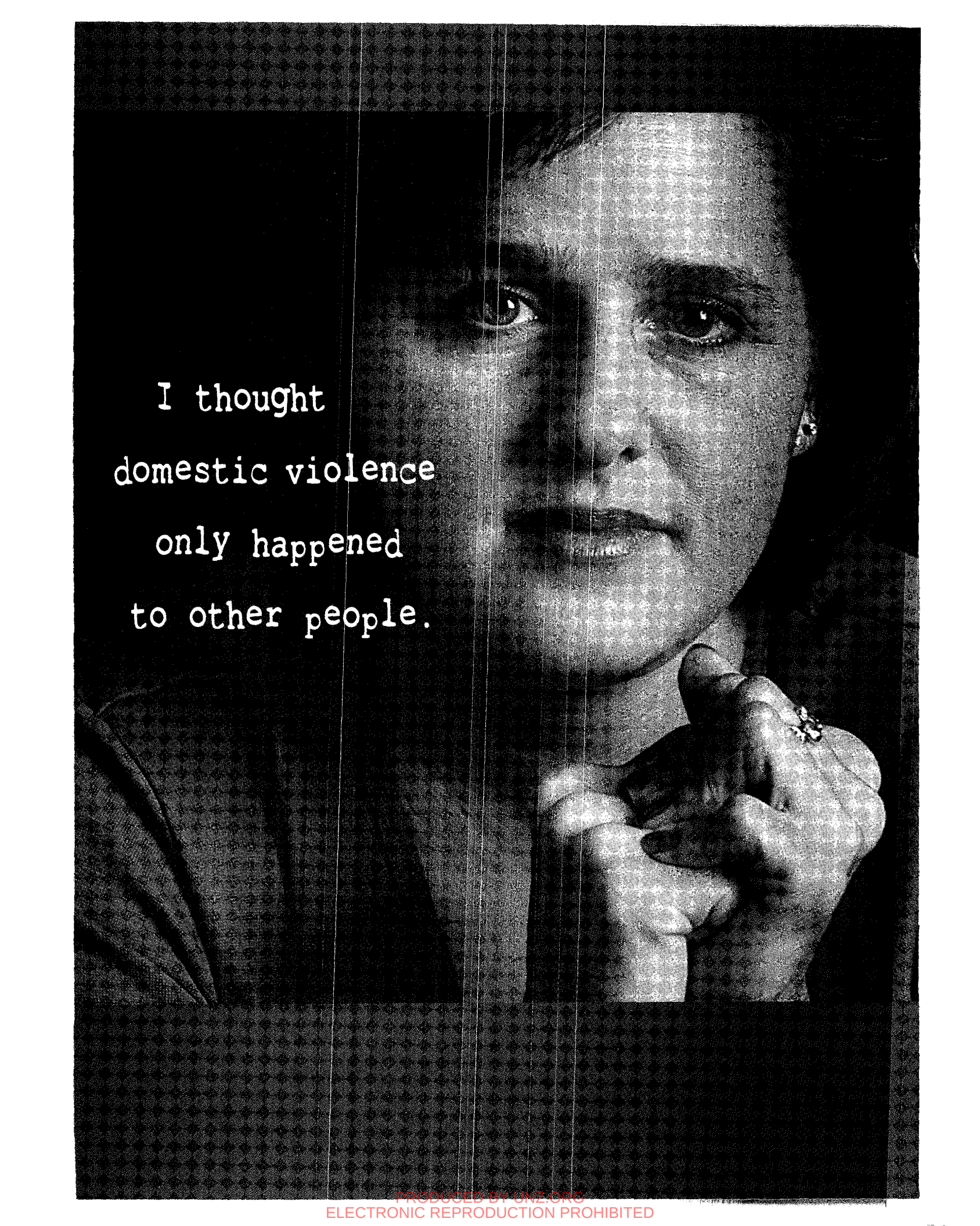
SEE HOW WE EARN IT.SM

SALOMON SMITH BARNEY

A member of citigroup

salomonsmithbarney.com

© 2000 Salomon Smith Barney Inc. Member SIPC. Salomon Smith Barney and "SEE HOW WE EARN IT." are service marks of Salomon Smith Barney, Inc.



I thought
domestic violence
only happened
to other people.

HELPING END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**When Shari's "perfect" boyfriend turned violent,
she felt trapped, alone and worthless.**

Beyond the beatings and harassment, she was consumed with the fear that he would hurt her children if she tried to escape. Finally, Shari found SAFEHOME, a program for victims of domestic violence in Johnson County, Kansas that gave her counseling and support — and the courage to begin a better life.

As a career woman and mother of two, Shari knows firsthand that domestic abuse is not the problem of "other" people. It affects millions of women, men and children in every community, regardless of race or income. The time to stop the violence is now.

That's why we established *The Philip Morris Campaign Against Domestic Violence*. Our support of SAFEHOME and similar organizations nationwide is just one of the ways we've been making a difference to communities in need for more than forty years.

Then it happened to me.

If you or someone you know needs help, contact:

National Domestic Violence Hotline

(800) 799-SAFE

(800) 787-3224 (TTY)

www.ndvh.org

Supported by the Philip Morris family of companies

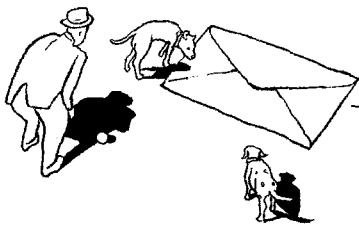
KRAFT FOODS, INC. MILLER BREWING COMPANY PHILIP MORRIS U.S.A.

www.philipmorris.com

Photo: Donna Ferrato

© 2001 Philip Morris Management Corp.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

What Global Language?

Barbara Wallraff's article "What Global Language?" (November *Atlantic*) is an interesting review of the current status of English as lingua franca, but I believe that the particulars she notes are neither new nor peculiar to our newest "global language."

The last several languages that spread far beyond their original borders, such as Koine Greek, spread by Alexander's troops and subsequent events; Latin, from the Roman Empire and the Roman Catholic Church; French and Spanish; and now English, have all had common features and problems. Koine Greek was a simplified Greek, shorn of some of its more extreme grammatical peculiarities, and mangled to various degrees. Aristotle would have had great difficulty with much of it. Although Latin had common texts from the Church, including Jerome's Vulgate Bible, and although work from scholars was good, it went downhill from there. Spanish had so many variants (which can lead to howlers and grave embarrassments) that thick dictionaries have been compiled of those variants. And how would a Cajun fare in Marseille? An Arab in Morocco and one in Syria do not converse easily; a northern German and a Bavarian trying to converse are a classic subject for stand-up comedy.

The "problems" of wide variation in English may well be lessened because of better communication, but they are not different. English began as a pidgin link between Saxons and Danes, and its innate simplicity and openness to innovation have led it, by a selection process, to its present position. It is imperfect, yet one of the best tools we have for communication and community in our global village.

Bill Rudersdorf
Houston, Texas

It is wrong to state that no predominantly English-speaking country is a member of the European Monetary Union. Ireland is. It will be interesting to see whether its uniqueness in this regard affects the location of financial institutions within the EMU.

Brendan Walsh
Dublin, Ireland

Notwithstanding the opinions of Barbara Wallraff, English is the global language of science. Any scientist who wishes to communicate his ideas to the scientific community must do it in English, or his voice will not be heard. This has caused great difficulty to those Asian scientists who still publish in languages other than English.

The rest of the world's countries have slowly shifted to printing their scientific journals only in English, in most cases not allowing publications in their own languages. Until China becomes the most powerful nation in the world and we are forced, all of us, to learn Chinese (provided the Chinese can decide which of their languages they will use), English will be the language of science and, of course, diplomacy.

Ellis Glazier
La Paz, Mexico

Barbara Wallraff concludes that English is not holding its own in the United States because of increases in the number of people in this country who speak other languages, and because of the arrival of some immigrants who do not speak English well and "may not even see the point of going to the trouble of learning it."

Not to worry. Immigrants are acquiring English rapidly and well. In 1993 only 8.8 percent of native speakers of Spanish living in the United States said they spoke no English, and 71.5 percent said they spoke English

"well" or "very well." This is even more impressive when one considers that these figures include newcomers. Moreover, results for Spanish-speakers were nearly identical to those reported by speakers of Asian and Pacific Island languages.

Research consistently shows that languages spoken by immigrants are typically not maintained and are rarely developed. This finding is one of the most solid and consistent results in language research, yet it appears to be nearly unknown to the public. A recent confirmation comes from research by Ruben Rumbaut, of Michigan State University, and Alejandro Portes, of Johns Hopkins University: By the time immigrant students are in high school, most prefer English to their family language and feel more competent in English. Even for the group considered to be the most English-resistant, students of Mexican origin, the shift to English is obvious.

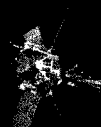
Stephen Krashen
Los Angeles, Calif.

Barbara Wallraff says that Canada's linguistic fate hung by a slender thread in the October, 1995, vote by the people of Quebec on secession from Canada. The reason for this contention is that Canada's roughly 30 million citizens are in theory bilingual, so if Quebec had seceded from Canada, the two language groups, French and English, would be on their way to being largely monolingual. But the descendants of Canada's two founding nations are largely monolingual, and the secession of Quebec would not have affected this.

A visit to Montreal will confirm the existence of a population of bilingual (depending on how rigid one's definition of "bilingual" is) speakers in Canada. But Montreal and possibly Ottawa—

**Satellite Technology**

Defense. Navigation. Earth sciences. Telecommunications. Every day, millions of people depend on satellites for services that are essential to national priorities. Developing and integrating satellite technology to help military and commercial customers deliver those services—and accomplish their missions—is the essence of what we do. The world is changing. Lockheed Martin is changing with it.



soldiers' lives depend on them.

travelers steer by them.



whole industries revolve around them.

that's what we think about most

when we build them.



New Year's Resolution: Drink Better Coffee



Save \$1.00 OFF per pound
on this award-winning coffee
for the month of February
when you purchase online.

Order now and discover
a coffee legend, only
at www.batdorf.com



Since 1986

800-955-5282
www.batdorf.com

because the federal government's affairs are conducted in both languages—are not representative of the whole of Canada. Outside Montreal and certain pockets of Ontario, Canadians of either language group have a tenuous grasp on the other official language.

Contrary to perceptions outside Canada, the majority of Canadians are descended from the English, the Scots, and the Irish rather than from the French. Canada's francophone population today is probably under seven or eight million. The other twenty-some million Canadians speak English as either their native or their adopted tongue.

Although English-Canadian universities—again, possibly with a few exceptions—require entering students to have studied French at least up to their final year of high school, this is not enough language training to qualify a student as bilingual or anything close to it. Most Canadians are like Wallraff, who states in her article that even though she spent years in school studying a foreign language, she is barely able to summon enough of it to order dinner in a restaurant.

Mark Bentley
New York, N.Y.

Barbara Wallraff replies:

The main point of "What Global Language?" was that we should not imagine English and other languages to be in some kind of competition that one of them must eventually win. On the contrary, the more widely English is used worldwide, the larger will be the number of bilingual and multilingual English-speakers. This has important implications. For one thing, English is likely to be used in increasingly divergent ways in different places. Likely, too, is that people who speak English and another language or two or three will have an advantage over those of us who speak only English. Hence it would be in our country's interest to encourage immigrants to retain their first languages—even while they learn English, as Stephen Krashen is undoubtedly right that they do.

I'm grateful to Brendan Walsh for pointing out the mistake about English-speaking Ireland's presence in the European Monetary Union.

Hybrid Vigor

Gregg Easterbrook ("Hybrid Vigor," November *Atlantic*) is kind to recall my January, 1995, *Atlantic* article on ultralight hybrid-electric cars, but progress has accelerated so rapidly since then that he greatly understates the prospects. Honda's Insight, which I happily drive, is not, as Easterbrook says, "unaffordable"; it sells at an attractive but loss-making price not mainly because it's a hybrid or lightweight but because it comes from a small production run that uses costly new body tooling and low-initial-volume special parts. Honda has shown its faith in the hybrid drive system's economies of scale by committing the company's entire line of cars to adopt it soon. Similarly, Toyota will offer Prius-like hybrid drive systems across its full range, from subcompacts to big trucks.

Performance and economics will improve dramatically—far beyond Easterbrook's expected 30 to 40 mpg—as aluminum bodies are replaced by molded polymer composites with lower total manufacturing costs, and as engine hybrids are leapfrogged by efficiency-doubling hydrogen fuel cells. Volkswagen is now making a city car that gets approximately 78 mpg; it plans volume production of a carbon-fiber version in 2003 that will get roughly 235 mpg. Eight major automakers plan for volume production of fuel-cell cars in 2003–2005. The 70 mpg that Easterbrook considers impossible in "large, practical cars" has already been exceeded by the Big Three. GM's aerodynamic diesel-hybrid Precept, for example, was just tested at 79.6 mpg (gasoline equivalent) even before further lightweighting. And big automakers' gratifying \$10 billion commitment to our design philosophy is being complemented by our development of an uncompromised sporty 100-mpg SUV-like Hypercar (SM).

Amory B. Lovins
CEO (Research), Rocky Mountain Institute
Chairman, Hypercar, Inc.
Snowmass, Colo.

"Hybrid Vigor" was informative, but based on a false premise—that electric vehicles (EVs) were a failed ex-

periment. The automakers have very good reasons to stifle EVs. Today's internal-combustion-engine-driven family sedan is a stupendously complex device. EVs can be far more simple, reliable, and durable. That means lower selling prices, longer life, and therefore lower profits. Since EVs are much easier to produce, smaller companies can compete with the industry giants. This is the automakers' worst nightmare. It could ultimately be as bad as IBM's loss of the PC market to smaller start-ups.

EVs wouldn't be available from the major automakers at all if the California Air Resources Board hadn't forced the issue. The 1990 Zero Emissions Vehicle mandate required automakers to start producing EVs in 1998 and make them 10 percent of sales by 2002. The automakers dug in their heels and began a flood of anti-EV propaganda. In 1996 they were able to negotiate a deal with the Air Resources Board to start a pilot program instead of production. A limited number of EVs would be leased and monitored. Instead of simple, affordable EVs, they made expensive high-tech vehicles with unnecessarily exotic batteries. They marketed them ineffectively. Simply qualifying for a lease was an exercise in frustration. In the end the automakers proclaimed, to the public their PR barrage had already convinced, that EVs were too expensive and too limited, and no one wanted them. But when they closed down production, people were still waiting for cars. No matter. The manufacturers had "proved" their point: EVs aren't practical.

*Chris Tromley
Ardmore, Pa.*

Gregg Easterbrook is mistaken in thinking that pure electric cars were simply a technological failure that can be corrected by better technology. The problem with electric cars has been that they were designed to be as much like gasoline cars as possible; this fails to recognize an automobile as part of a system that includes roads, fuel, filling stations, and so forth.

Hybrid cars are, of course, a step in the right direction, but it is possible to go much, much further without any breakthroughs in battery technology.

The flawed design of electric cars grew fundamentally out of their political origins. Electric cars were built not in response to a market demand but in response to the regulatory requirements of the federal government and the state of California. People were induced to take the cars by their unrealistically low price tags: considering the small market for a highly specialized sports car, General Motors' EV1, for example, should have sold for at least \$100,000, not leased for a mere \$400 a month. But GM was under government orders to place the things as best it could, and therefore took a loss.

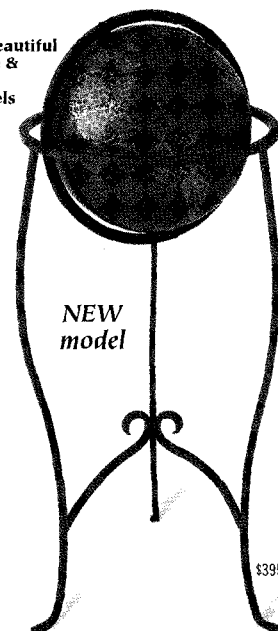
Electric cars did not make economic sense within the existing regulatory environment. Making due allowances for the effects of compound interest, gasoline at a dollar a gallon was only a minor portion of the cost of owning an automobile. Any fuel savings resulting from electric or hybrid cars were likely to be offset by the cost of the new cars themselves. Governments do not build automobiles, but they do build roads, and they have the power to tax gasoline. The seriousness of a government's commitment to electric cars can be accurately gauged by what it builds and what it taxes. The government was not prepared to raise gasoline taxes, or to build new roads of appropriate design, or to set up a network of battery-exchange stations. All the federal government and the state of California wanted, and were prepared to pay for, was an empty political gesture, so that politicians could pose as Greens and get elected to office. In the end that was what they got. I very much fear that the hybrid car may be yet another empty gesture.

*Andrew D. Todd
Morgantown, W. Va.*

I found some of Gregg Easterbrook's information regarding electric vehicles to be incorrect and misleading. I recently took possession of a new EV1 from General Motors after being on a waiting list for six months. This is the most practical and fun car I have ever owned. Yes, I said practical! Being an average urban driver, I rarely exceed sixty miles a day. This spunky car can travel about 140 miles on a charge, so range is

Eureka Globes Masterpiece Collection

12 Beautiful
Table &
Floor
Models



Call today for the store nearest you
or to request your free catalogue

1-888-473-9505 (toll free)

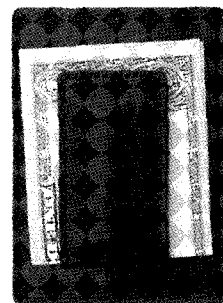
www.eurekaglobes.com

Fine Decorative Globes for Home and Office

Front Pocket Wallet

by

 BOSCA



A money clip, three credit card pockets and a central pocket are combined in this neat and convenient 3"x 4 1/8" wallet. Made in the USA of Bosca's superb Old Leather.

No. H078 Front Pocket Wallet \$41.00

State color: Cognac, Dark Brown or Black
Add \$6.00 handling. Satisfaction guaranteed.
Check, M/C, Visa or Amex.

Request a catalog or visit our web site for...

- Akubra Hats from Australia
- Filson Outdoor Clothing & Luggage
- Bosca Leather Wallets & Briefcases
- Celtic Jewelry & Wedding Bands
- Northwest Coast Indian Jewelry

800-324-4934 www.davidmorgan.com

 **David Morgan**

11812 N Creek Pkwy N, Suite 103, Bothell WA 98011

not an issue. I never need to enter a gas station again: my car refuels in my driveway while I am sleeping. My new car has *much better acceleration than any other car I have owned*. Easterbrook's assertion that it would be passed by a semi going up a hill is absurd and shows his lack of homework on the subject.

To describe this technology as a failure is silly. The auto industry has made little effort to promote these vehicles, and hundreds of people are still on waiting lists to get them.

*Ken Katz
Oakland, Calif.*

Gregg Easterbrook properly celebrates the advances of hybrid cars like the Toyota Prius and the Honda Insight. But he fails to note that they emit more polluting exhaust than electric cars, and he foolishly follows the latest media fashions in declaring that electric cars are an idea that has failed.

Here in California we know better. The state Air Resources Board just renewed our Zero-Emissions Vehicle

(ZEV) program, which will require major automakers to produce roughly 20,000 battery-electric cars beginning in 2003. The ARB rightfully considers the ZEV to be the "gold standard" for low-pollution cars.

Automakers have already sold or leased more than 2,000 electric cars in California, and the drivers of these vehicles love them: today's electric cars are powerful, peppy, and virtually maintenance-free. No oil changes, no smog checks, and no trips to the gas station. They are cheap to refuel, and noise from the electric motor is imperceptible.

There have been significant advances in battery technology over the past ten years, and GM's EV1, equipped with a nickel-metal hydride battery, gets in excess of 100 miles per charge. That may not be enough for every purpose, but it works in many fleet applications, and it's perfect for almost everyone's daily commute.

*Kevin Finney
Coalition for Clean Air
Los Angeles, Calif.*

"Hybrid Vigor" is so misleading that it is difficult to believe that Gregg Easterbrook spent any time conducting research for his article. I have driven GM's EV1 for more than two years. My range per charge is 150 miles on the highway and ninety in the city. It is the only car I use. I do not have to pay for tune-ups, oil changes, or smog checks. Electricity costs me less than half the cost of gasoline. I can accelerate from zero to 60 in under eight seconds. I never have to go out of my way to "fill up," because I charge in my driveway at night while I sleep.

I have no intention of ever going back to gasoline. Easterbrook does a disservice to his readers in attempting to propagate the myth that EVs are inadequate and unpopular. In fact, there is a waiting list for them in California.

EVs eliminate oil spills, the export of billions of petro-dollars, and emissions associated with notoriously dirty tankers, refineries, and diesel delivery trucks. When one counts emissions from electricity-generating plants, EVs are still

T. ROWE PRICE A TAX-FREE FAMILY WITH PROVEN PERFORMANCE

T. ROWE PRICE's tax-free funds offer you proven performance, tax savings, and, as always, low cost. All of the T. Rowe Price tax-free municipal funds rated by Morningstar received 4 or 5 stars for their risk-adjusted performance. T. Rowe Price tax-free funds can help you shelter more of your hard-earned income from federal income taxes (and, in some cases, state and local taxes, too*). For more information and a prospectus, visit our Web site or call. Past performance cannot guarantee future results. **100% no load.**

Invest With Confidence
T. Rowe Price

Some income may be subject to state and local taxes and the federal alternative minimum tax. Income earned by nonresidents of the fund's designated state will be subject to applicable state and local taxes. For investors in the Florida Intermediate Tax-Free Fund, principal may be exempt from the intangibles tax. For each fund with at least a three-year history, Morningstar calculates a Morningstar Rating™ metric each month by subtracting the return on a 90-day U.S. Treasury bill from the fund's load-adjusted return for the same period and then adjusting this excess return for risk. The top 10% of funds in each broad asset class receive 5 stars, the

cleaner on a per-mile basis than the cleanest available gasoline automobile.

Robert Seldon
Santa Monica, Calif.

Gregg Easterbrook replies:

Some things inspire small but intensely loyal followings, and electric cars appear to be one of them. These letters present electric cars as cheap, reliable, practical, fabulous. Why do so few people buy them? Ken Katz and Robert Seldon refer to a waiting list for electric cars; actually, General Motors was able to sell fewer than 100 of its EVs in California in 1999 before it suspended production. Only about 3,000 electric vehicles have been bought nationwide. Devotees claim that manufacturers conspire not to sell electric vehicles—an argument that seems strained; if the public were clamoring for such cars, automakers would have to be fools not to offer them. (Even Honda, with its clean-green marketing approach, has dropped out of EV sales.) Maybe the popularity of electric cars will change with future technical improvements. For the moment, however, the market for electric cars seems smaller than the market for quill pens.

Soccer Turks

Your article "The Crescent and the Tricolor" (by Christopher Caldwell, November *Atlantic*) incorrectly states that "there's not a single Turk on the German football team." Indeed, three German-born Turks, Mustafa Dogan, Mehmet Scholl, and Mahmut Yilmaz, play for the national team. But drawing a relationship between the number of foreign athletes on a national team and ethnic integration is dubious at best. Soccer teams are about finding the best players, not about solving social problems. Meanwhile, economic discrepancies and racism keep the vast majority of French Arabs and German Turks from meaningful integration.

Günay Evinch
Potomac, Md.

Christopher Caldwell replies:

I didn't say that the German soccer team included no Turks or Turkish-Germans. The Frenchman who made that claim to me did so in the wake of the 1998 World

Cup, as I noted in the article. And he was correct: none of the three players Günay Evinch mentions were on Germany's World Cup roster two years ago.

Unforgettable?

Peter Berkowitz ("Wooded by Freedom?," October *Atlantic*) describes the closing scene of the picture *Casablanca* as "unforgettable" but apparently does not himself accurately remember it.

Rick does not shoot Major Strasser. That is the act of the French policeman, played by Claude Rains, who then injects a refreshing bit of cynicism into that otherwise mawkish movie with the command "Round up the usual suspects."

Keith C. Angus
Kemptville, Ontario

Peter Berkowitz replies:

Keith Angus is right about who shot Major Strasser but wrong about its significance. Louis's order to round up the usual suspects represents the triumph of friendship over cynicism.

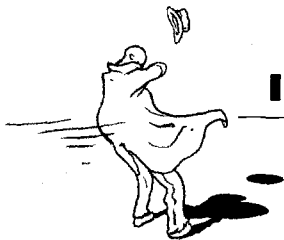
**Overall Morningstar Ratings™
for risk-adjusted performance as of 11/30/00†**

Fund	Overall	3 yr	5 yr	10 yr
Tax-Free Short Intermediate	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★
Tax-Free Intermediate	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	—
Tax-Free Income	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Tax-Free High Yield	★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★
California Bond	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Florida Intermediate	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	—
Georgia Bond	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	—
Maryland Bond	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★
Maryland Short	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	—
New Jersey Bond	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	—
New York Bond	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★
Virginia Bond	★★★★	★★★★	★★★★	—
Summit Municipal Income	★★★★★	★★★★	★★★★★	—
Summit Municipal Intermediate	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	—

The funds were rated among 1,717, 1,476, and 439 municipal bond funds for the 3-, 5-, and 10-year periods ended 11/30/00, respectively.

Next 22.5% receive 4 stars, the next 35% receive 3 stars, the next 22.5% receive 2 stars and the bottom 10% receive 1 star. The Overall Morningstar Rating for a fund is derived from a weighted average of the performance figures associated with its 3-, 5-, and 10 year (if applicable) Morningstar Rating metrics calculated as of 11/30/00. Each fund is rated exclusively against U.S.-domiciled domestic municipal funds. For more information, including fees, expenses, and risks, read the prospectus carefully before investing. T. Rowe Price Investment Services, Inc. Distributor.

1FF057691



INNOCENT BYSTANDER

by CULLEN MURPHY

COMMON STOCK

Knowing something about everything versus everything about something

.....

A few weeks ago emissaries from the game show *Jeopardy!* swept through a quadrant of rural Connecticut, chumming for contestants, and one of my sisters signed up for a quiz. She did pretty well, though she wasn't tendered an invitation. Afterward, at a family gathering, we fielded some of the questions. Hamlet's mother and father? City in South Africa reminiscent of flowers? French word for a newborn's wardrobe? Battle where Cervantes lost the use of his hand? I would like to report that we shouted as one, "Gertrude and Hamlet!" "Bloemfontein!" "Layette!" and "Lepanto!" In truth, we presented a pathetic spectacle of mumbled feints and embarrassed glances.

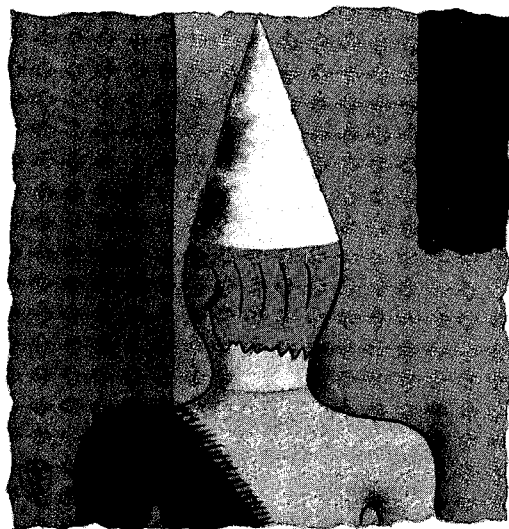
The moment brought to mind the passage in *My Early Life* (1930) in which Winston Churchill described his encounter with the Latin portion of the entrance examination for Harrow.

I wrote my name at the top of the page. I wrote down the number of the question 'I'. After much reflection I put a bracket round it thus '(I)'. But thereafter I could not think of anything connected with it that was either relevant or true. Incidentally there arrived from nowhere in particular a blot and several smudges. I gazed for two whole hours at this sad spectacle.

Our poor showing on those *Jeopardy!* Questions should probably have come as no surprise. One of the great constants in public commentary is the fretting over how little Americans know about a great many important matters, and how rapidly even that puddle of knowledge seems to be evaporating. Last winter the American Council of

Trustees and Alumni released a widely publicized study revealing that some 80 percent of seniors at elite colleges and universities had scored the equivalent of a D or an F on a rudimentary survey of American history. Only 22 percent of the students surveyed knew that the words about government's being "of the people, by the people, for the people" came from the Gettysburg Address. Only 34 percent could identify the American general at Yorktown. On a more positive note, 99 percent correctly identified Beavis and Butthead.

Snapshots like this one are often compared with the bright picture in



other countries. Some years ago the National Endowment for the Humanities published a selection of questions from tests administered to university-bound students in France, Germany, England, Wales, and Japan. It's hard to imagine any American senior, except maybe the young Michael Beschloss, relishing an encounter with any of these questions. The French baccalaureate exam asked students to explicate a passage from Kant or write an essay on the (unmistakably French) topic "What does one gain by losing one's illusions?" The

British exam for the general certificate of education probed deeply into American history: "'Unbelievably naive' or 'a dogged man of principle': which verdict better characterises the conduct of Woodrow Wilson from 1917 to 1920?" The entrance exam for Tokyo University demanded the following: "Describe the nature of the way the Chinese absorbed Western culture, using the examples of their response to the Jesuit priests between the late Ming and the early Ch'ing dynasties."

Of course, Americans lose face not only when compared with students in other countries but also when compared with Americans of yesteryear. Not long ago, at a beach house, I chanced upon a 1956 edition of the board game *Go to the Head of the Class*, and discovered that American children of the 1950s—themselves objects of scorn—had it all over their descendants. Players of the game must answer questions correctly in order to advance. "Who was the 'Napoleon of the Stump'—President Tyler, Polk or Pierce?" "Was Lillie Langtry or Lillian Russell known as the 'Jersey Lily'?" "How many seedless apple

trees were there in the world in 1905—5, 25, 205, 2,005, or 2,505?" "Birchard was which President's middle name?" "Simone Simon was born where?" The game, advertised as being for people "8 to Adult," is now virtually unplayable.

Evidence of this sort is undeniably sobering—but it tells only part of the story. The fact is, the dwindling amount of knowledge that Americans hold in common seems to be outweighed by an expanding amount of particularized knowledge held by groups of indi-

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARC ROSENTHAL



5:25 P.M. Lawrenceburg, Kentucky.
Website under construction.

Not the latest thing. The genuine thing.



THE FINEST KENTUCKY BOURBON. MADE IN LAWRENCEBURG.



viduals. This counterphenomenon is forcefully brought home by each new edition of *The Yearbook of Experts, Authorities & Spokespersons*, a reference work to which I have developed a mild addiction. A few minutes with the yearbook will change the mind of anyone convinced that America has become the home of the slouch.

Americans have always harbored considerable respect for expert advice (think of Squanto and Lafayette, Dale Carnegie and Dr. Ruth), and the impulse now extends to every last corner of experience. *The Yearbook* has been published annually since 1984, and it seems to have grown fatter with every edition—the 1999 and 2000 volumes each contain upwards of 10,000 citations. This is the work to consult when you need to find the people in America who know everything about something: anger management or managed care, premarital investigations or premenstrual syndrome, cult groups or ethnic groups, needlework or needle exchange, e-business or *E. coli*.

Meet Randall Bell, real-estate consultant and expert on “damage and stigma issues” and “mitigation strategies.” (Typical challenge: selling the mansion that belonged to the “Heaven’s Gate” cult.) Meet the relationship coach Fran Greene, who has “redefined flirting for the new millennium,” and the body-language expert Raymond C. McGraime, who can divulge “the implications of more than 30 handshakes.” Here is where to find a law firm specializing in mass disasters (“articulate technical analysis of crashes and accident investigations”) and the person responsible for developing Musical Canine Freestyle (“combines the skill of dog obedience with the art of dance”).

Some of the specialists offer combinations of talents: “Organizational Psychologist and Harmonica Expert,” “psychotherapy and kickboxing.” Most are narrowly focused: Armageddon. Bankruptcy. Celibacy. Conspiracy. De-

mentia. Fat Advocacy. Foreplay. Hasidic Thought. Livestock. Naval Power. Near-Death Experience. Media Gurus. Office Ethics. Organ Procurement. Political Asylum. Subliminal Communication. Telephone Pet Peeves. Terrorism Software. Theatrical Dentistry.

In short, *The Yearbook of Experts, Authorities & Spokespersons* renders the whole of national life into its component parts, each with a cadre of expert custodians. Should this document sur-



vive the eons, it will deserve the reverence accorded the Domesday Book.

“I think we agree, the past is over,” George W. Bush declared to reporters last spring. So true. And yet in thinking about the shifting balance between common knowledge and private expertise it may help to recall eighteenth-century England and the process known as enclosure. A rural property system in which people of all classes shared vast swaths of land for many purposes inevitably succumbed to modernization, giving way to a system in which the commons devolved into smaller, privately held parcels devoted to specialized uses. Year after year Parliament carved up additional tracts of countryside, enacting bills “for dividing, allotting, and enclosing the open and common fields.” The once unbroken landscape was soon laced with walls and fences.

Knowledge, of course, is not a zero-sum game—that one person has more doesn’t mean that some other person

has less. There isn’t a Law of Conservation of Knowledge and Ignorance, holding that the amount of knowledge in the world is constant and that as more is funneled into the hands of experts, the amount available to the ordinary person must inevitably decline. Still, relying on experts enables the rest of us to know less about many things, and makes the acquisition of some kinds of knowledge seem pointless or redundant.

Specialization is efficient, and marks our long progression from a hunter-gatherer society to a search-engine society. How far should the balance be allowed to tip? In 1905 the College Entrance Examination Board could take for granted a basic familiarity with geophysical processes. It matter-of-factly asked, “What are the four consequences of the form and rotation of the earth?” A century later ABC News created a spinning globe for its *World News Tonight* that turned in the wrong direction.

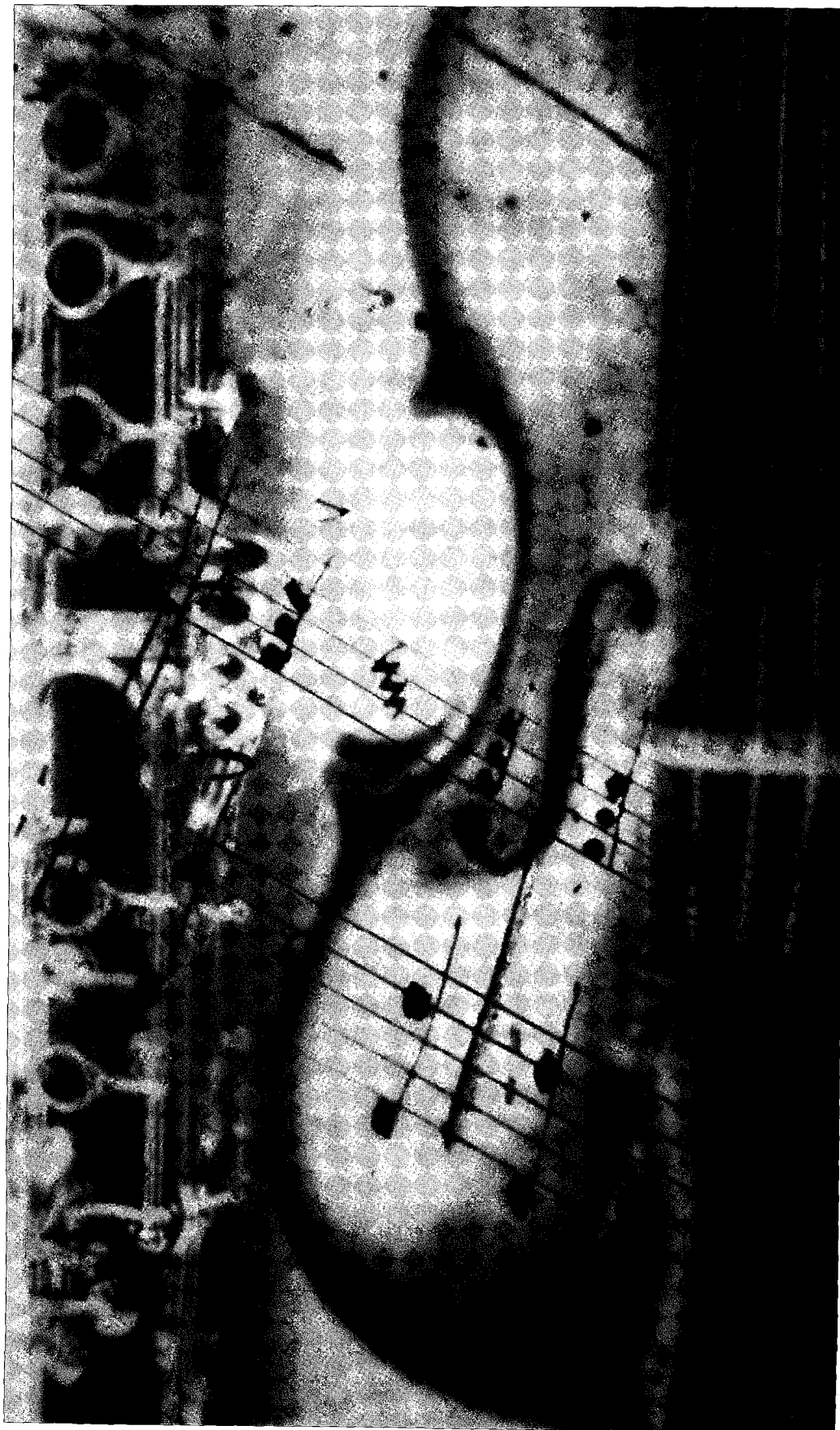
The United States will never have a true national curriculum (besides *Jeopardy!*), and there will never again be a generation capable of replying “Polk,” “Lillie Langtry,” “2,005,” “Rutherford B. Hayes’s,” and “Marseilles” to those questions from Go to the Head of the Class. But it probably makes sense to designate a dozen or so things that every American should know. I’m hardly an expert, but my short list would include: the difference between Theodore and Franklin, and between Joe and Eugene; the significance of Booth, Guiteau, Czolgosz, and Oswald; the meaning of the term “tax event”; the price of gasoline in other industrialized countries; the infield-fly rule; how to tell time on a nondigital watch; the custom that people be allowed off an elevator before others get on; the convention that when walking you keep to the right; the fact that a dozen specimens of a single species don’t count as one item for Express Lane purposes; and the fact that the now universal linguistic trope “No problem” is not synonymous with “You’re welcome.”

It’s a start, anyway. In this age of compartmentalization, I guess everyone should also know the phone number for tech support. ▀

SPECIAL ADVERTISING SECTION

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

PREVIEW



CLASSICAL

Spectacular Sounds
from Sweden

FILM

Terence Davies Takes
on Edith Wharton

DANCE

Balanchine's "Dances of
the League of David"

THEATER

Small and Large
Acts of Violence

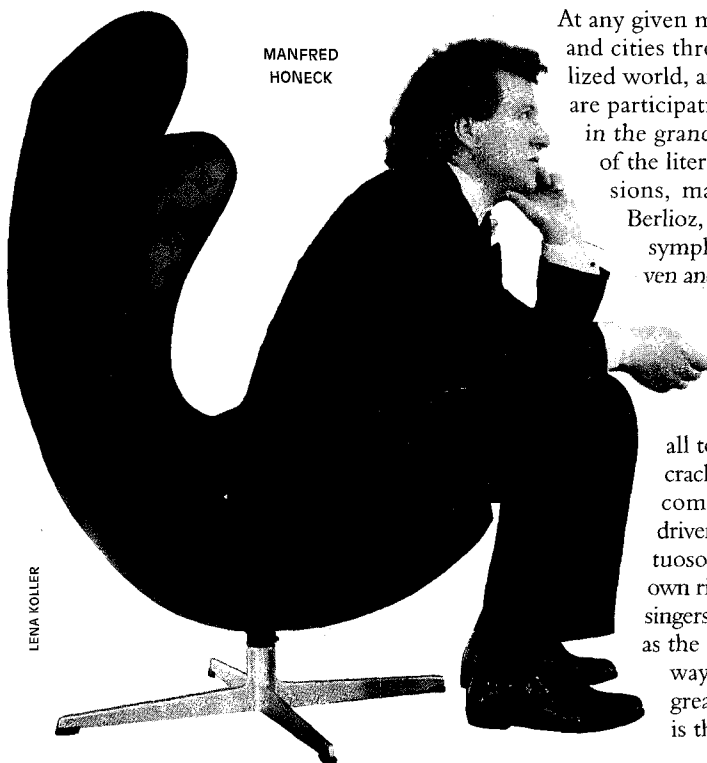
SPONSORED BY
CHRYSLER


PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CLASSICAL MUSIC

by Austin Baer

ONE FOR ALL AND ALL FOR ONE



MANFRED
HONECK

At any given moment, in towns and cities throughout the civilized world, amateur musicians are participating as key players in the grandest masterpieces of the literature: Bach's *Passions*, masses by Mozart, Berlioz, Brahms, or Verdi, symphonies of Beethoven and Mahler. Who are these pillars of our musical life?

Why, choristers, of course!

And yet, as we are all too apt to forget, a crack chorus (whether composed of Sunday drivers or lifers) is a virtuosos instrument in its own right, the individual singers as interdependent as the strings of a Steinway. Among the very greatest at large today is the Swedish Radio

Choir—so stellar that the exacting Riccardo Muti once flew the ensemble to Italy for a festival performance of Mozart's *Requiem*, and quite a picture they made, all those blondes, among the mosaics of Ravenna. This month, on tour in North America with the comparably eminent Eric Ericson Chamber Choir and the Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, these remarkable artists put themselves to the test in two wildly contrasting programs. The first—offered in Toronto and Ann Arbor—is a mixed bill including discoveries by Strauss, Lidholm, and Schnittke (his *Concerto for Mixed Chorus*), as well as Ligeti's eerily disembodied contemporary classic *Lux Aeterna*. The second—at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., and in South Bend, Indiana—features Verdi's heaven-storming *Requiem*, conducted by Manfred Honeck, whose stock is rising fast. Courtesy of Lincoln Center's "Great Performers" series, New Yorkers get to hear both bills. (February 9, 11; 212-721-6500.)

BEFORE AND AFTER *PSYCHO*

Movie fans know Bernard Herrmann (1911–1975) as the composer of the scores for *Citizen Kane* and *Psycho*. On February 15, we have a chance to get to know him better, thanks to Jonathan Sheffer, the conductor and artistic director of the Eos Orchestra (www.eosorchestra.com). Founded in New York in 1995 with the unpretentious objective of presenting "engaging musical programs to a diverse audience," Eos has swiftly made its name with surprising fare: a retrospective of the expatriate composer and litterateur Paul Bowles, brilliant evenings of rarely seen ten-minute operas, and more. This season's subscription series opens with a tribute to Herrmann featuring samples of Herrmann's pre-Hollywood orchestral music, experimental radio pieces he wrote as a sort of staff composer at CBS radio, the suite from *Psycho*, and excerpts from the most durable of Herrmann's operas, *Wuthering Heights*. "At CBS, Herrmann was called upon to compose and arrange in every conceivable style, to accompany dramas and variety shows," Sheffer says. "He became very skilled at the sort of spare, hypnotic atmospheres we associate with his music for Hitchcock's films." Removed from the celluloid context, movie music remains, for many, a suspect genre, a kind of wallpaper in sound. Sheffer would disagree. "Movie music is used to increase emotional depth of film, to depict or enhance seen or unseen character and plot points," he says. "Herrmann's music, unlike that of his 'Golden Age' contemporaries in Hollywood, created complex and subtle psychological moods: less Strauss, more Schoenberg and Debussy." For tickets, call 212-691-6415.

THE NEW NEW GROVE

"When, in 1969, my colleagues and I began to lay our plans, we thought of the work we were preparing as the sixth edition of the dictionary first prepared by Sir George Grove in the 1870s and 1880s. As time and work went on, however, it became clear that we were producing not a new edition but a new dictionary." Thus, in his preface to *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, the editor Stanley Sadie described the genesis of a veritable bible. But a generation later, the *New Grove* itself has required the sort of overhaul contemplated in 1969. Lo, Behemoth! From the first edition's 20 volumes, measuring 44 linear inches, running to 22,500 articles and 16 million words, the second has expanded to a whopping 29 volumes, 55 linear inches, over 29,000 articles, and 25 million words (list price: a princely \$4,850). Dwell, if you like, on the extra space devoted to living composers and emerging research trends (Philip Glass, Arvo Pärt, feminism, postmodernism . . .). But the big deal this time is the electronic version (www.grovemusic.com), integrating the full text of the print version with twenty-first-century search capacities, cross-references, and related links. Annual, monthly, weekly, and hourly rates are available, and even owners of the retro print version may want to check in from time to time. A permanent editorial and research team is in place for regular revisions and updates. "Not that we'll be rethinking Mozart on a quarterly basis," cautions Laura Macy, the dictionary's publishing director.

AUSTIN BAER IS A WRITER BASED IN NEW YORK.

FILM

by Ella Taylor

EROS AS ÉMIGRÉ

Raised in rural Cuba in "a roomful of unhappy women"—among them his own mother—the novelist and poet Reinaldo Arenas found sexual and intellectual liberation in the heady, experimental early days of Fidel Castro's revolution. Unrepentantly homosexual and congenitally incapable of toeing anybody's party line, Arenas soon ran afoul of the authorities. Though his work was published abroad to great acclaim, at home his writing was banned and he spent years in prison or in hiding, until he joined the Mariel Harbor boatlift, in 1980, and settled in New York. In more solemn directorial hands than those of the artist Julian Schnabel (*Basquiat*), such a life might easily be tailored into a glum biopic. But *Before Night Falls*, "interpreted" from Arenas's posthumously published memoir, is a downright buoyant movie, due in large measure to a wonderfully excitable performance by the Spanish actor Javier Bardem. His Arenas is a mercurial man—part provincial naïf, part jaundiced sophisticate, by turns euphoric and despairing, never a natural victim, and always insisting on eros as the truest cultural revolt. The movie is itself a study in contrasts, with a powerfully lyrical juxtaposing of space and color that grasps, through Arenas's struggle, the beauty and horror of Cuban life—without, in the end, pinning the full blame for the writer's predicament on Castro. Even in New York, Arenas never found the unconditional freedom he craved. He died of AIDS, in 1990, attended by his faithful old friend Lázaro Gómez Carriles, who, with Schnabel and Cunningham O'Keefe, cowrote the movie's muscular screenplay.

USA FILMS



TONY LEUNG (LEFT) AND MAGGIE CHEUNG
STAR IN *IN THE MOOD FOR LOVE*

NERVOUS LAUGHTER

Recent film adaptations of Edith Wharton's novels—John Madden's *Ethan Frome*, Martin Scorsese's *The Age of Innocence*—have foundered on excessive reverence for period accuracy and a funereal way with tone. Oddly enough, it takes a British director—and one like Terence Davies, whose very slow, very English movies have met with only critical success in the United States—to enliven our understanding of Wharton's themes without cheapening them in the process. Though it was shot in Scotland, *The House of Mirth* does sumptuous justice to its belle époque New York setting. Yet one feels one is watching not a costume drama but the slow unfurling of a genteel subculture whose brocaded decorum conceals a snake pit peopled with conniving hypocrites. As the urbane yet naïve socialite Lily Bart, who believes that in the absence of wealth, her beauty, wit, and charm will solidify her social standing, Gillian Anderson, a more expansive actress than her role as Agent Dana Scully in *The X-Files* would suggest, exudes the consumptive radiance of a typical Wharton heroine—a victim of others' malice, but also of her own corruptibility and, ultimately, hard-won moral scruples. Eric Stoltz's tendency to be a bit of a stiff serves him well as Lawrence Selden, the one man Lily might marry purely for love. Davies's screenplay prunes the novel yet remains faithful to Wharton's quiet passion, and he directs with a lush delirium inflected with an elfin humor that offers relief from the story's bleak insistence on the inadequacy of principles in a venal world.

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

On the principle that the best love stories are sustained by unfulfilled or secret desire, the Hong Kong director Wong Kar-wai (best known in the United States for his whimsical 1994 comedy, *Chungking Express*) has spent a prolific career obsessively revisiting the theme while crafting a dazzling fusion of cinematic styles from both sides of the Pacific. Set in Hong Kong in 1962, his latest film, *In the Mood for Love* (billed as a sequel to his 1991 film, *Days of Being Wild*, and boasting the same two romantic leads), turns on two neigh-

bors in a crowded rooming house who, after discovering that their spouses are having an affair—with each other—struggle with their own growing mutual attraction. Coifed to the gills *en bouffant* and graceful as a swan in a series of to-die-for high-necked, form-fitting shifts, the Hong Kong martial arts star Maggie Cheung is ravishing but droopy as the lonely wife who finds solace with her equally proper neighbor (Hong Kong heartthrob Tony Leung). The aching beauty of the movie's visual style and its impishly anachronistic

score are woefully undercut by the flat affect that courses sluggishly between the would-be lovers, on whom Wong Kar-wai's characteristically voyeuristic and claustrophobic camera spies, framing them in doorways and lintels or disappearing around corners. Though not unduly lengthy by current standards, *In the Mood for Love* feels like one of the longest brief encounters in cinema history—all mood and precious little encounter.

ELLA TAYLOR IS A FILM CRITIC FOR LA WEEKLY.

Five great seats. One incredible footrest.



SEBRING SEDAN



The all-new Chrysler Sebring LXi Sedan—a remarkably spacious vehicle with a 2.7 liter multi-valve V6 engine which boasts 200 horsepower. The leather-trimmed interior features an eight-way

*Optional. The BEST BUY SEAL is a registered trademark of Consumers Digest, Inc., used under license.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



power driver's seat and available 4-disc-in-dash CD changer.* The Sebring Sedan is not only winner of a *Consumers Digest* "Best Buy" award, it's the ideal cure for tired feet. Call 1.800.CHRYSLER or visit www.chrysler.com.



DANCE & THEATER

by Nancy Dalva and John Istel

RADICAL REVIVALS

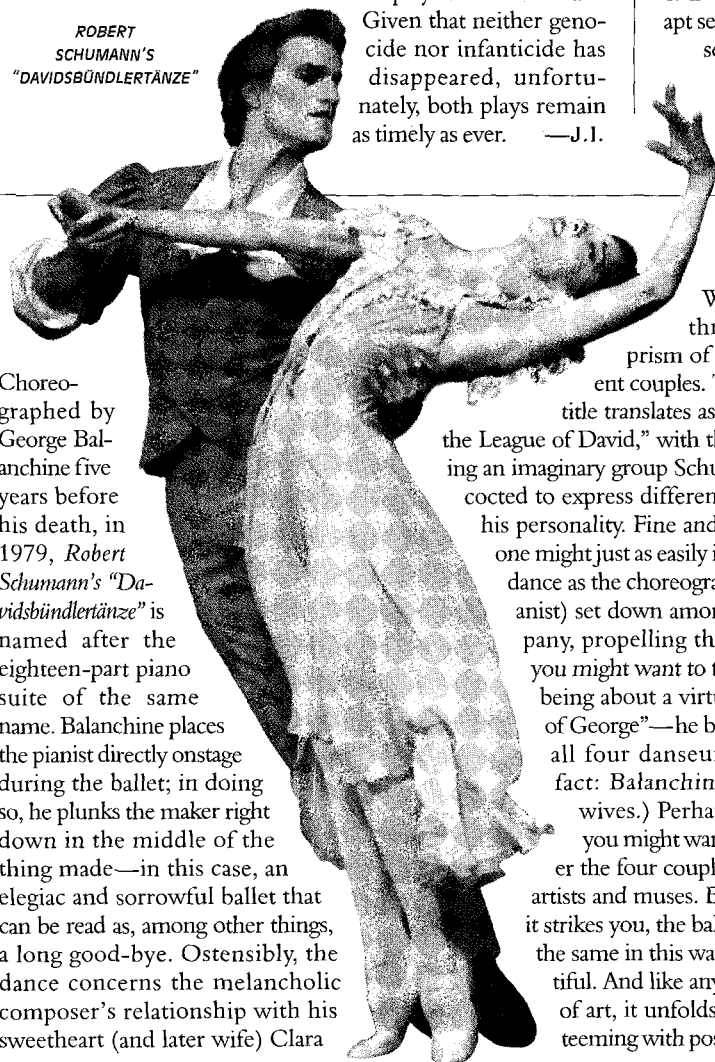
In 1965, two plays—Peter Weiss's Holocaust documentary *The Investigation* and Edward Bond's savage slice of London working-class life, *Saved*—opened in Europe within weeks of each other. It was a seismic moment in twentieth-century drama because each work displayed new theatrical vernaculars with which to speak about unspeakable violence. This month, both works receive rare revivals in the United States: Robert Woodruff directs *Saved* for Theatre for a New Audience, in New York, and Irene Lewis mounts *The Investigation* for Baltimore's Center Stage. For the latter play, Weiss began with transcripts of the 1964 Frankfurt war crimes trials brought by Auschwitz survivors, carefully edited them into verse lines sans punctuation, and sculpted such scenes as "The Song of Cyklon B" and "The Song of the Fire Ovens." Several weeks after *The Investigation* opened simultaneously at fifteen theaters, London audiences were confronted with *Saved*. "I write about violence as naturally as Jane Austen wrote about manners," Bond has said. And indeed his "Oedipal comedy," written in gritty street patois, climaxes with the onstage murder of an infant. The point—that "small" acts of violence result from the systemic violence of capitalism—was lost on the Lord Chamberlain's office, which made *Saved* a cause célèbre as the last play banned in Britain.

ROBERT
SCHUMANN'S
"DAVIDSBÜNDLERTÄNZE"

Given that neither genocide nor infanticide has disappeared, unfortunately, both plays remain as timely as ever. —J.I.

Choreographed by George Balanchine five years before his death, in 1979, Robert Schumann's "Davidsbündlertänze" is named after the eighteen-part piano suite of the same name. Balanchine places the pianist directly onstage during the ballet; in doing so, he plunks the maker right down in the middle of the thing made—in this case, an elegiac and sorrowful ballet that can be read as, among other things, a long good-bye. Ostensibly, the dance concerns the melancholic composer's relationship with his sweetheart (and later wife) Clara

PAUL KOLNIK



SPRING'S AWAKENING

That marching-band sound you hear in the distance may just be the annual spring migration of big-budget musicals to Broadway. This month, two undergo final tinkering out of town. The most anticipated is the stage adaptation of Mel Brooks's feature film *The Producers*, in which Nathan Lane and Matthew Broderick costar as a pair of schemers who have the audacity to con theater investors of their money via a musical project unforgettably dubbed *Springtime for Hitler*. Their show might have succeeded if they also had Susan Stroman (*Contact*, *The Music Man*) as their director and choreographer. She gives the musical its final tune-up February 1–25 at the Cadillac Palace, in Chicago. Meanwhile, in Stamford, Connecticut (Palace Theatre, February 20–25), a revival of the Jule Styne–Comden and Green musical *Bells Are Ringing* makes its final port of call. It stars Faith Prince as Ella Peterson, the role for which Judy Holliday won a Tony Award, in 1956. Director Tina Landau (*Floyd Collins*) makes her Broadway debut with the classic musical comedy about an irrepressible answering service employee who can't stay out of her clients' lives. It features such stellar Styne compositions as "It's a Perfect Relationship," in which Ella croons about a man she's fallen in love with over the phone: "Can he dance like Fred Astaire?/Is he dark or is he fair?/Pompadour or not a hair?/Well, I don't care!" It's an apt sentiment this time of year for all curious musical-theater obsessives. Both shows open in New York in April. —J.I.

NANCY DALVA'S ESSAYS APPEAR IN THE MAGAZINE TWICE. JOHN ISTEL IS THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF STAGEBILL.

THE LEAGUE OF GEORGE

Wieck, seen through the prism of four different couples. The music's title translates as "Dances of the League of David," with the latter being an imaginary group Schumann concocted to express different aspects of his personality. Fine and dandy, but one might just as easily interpret the dance as the choreographer (as pianist) set down among his company, propelling the work. Or you might want to think of it as being about a virtual "League of George"—he being at once all four danseurs. (Handy fact: Balanchine had four wives.) Perhaps, though, you might want to consider the four couples simply as artists and muses. But however it strikes you, the ballet is always the same in this way: it is beautiful. And like any great work of art, it unfolds before you teeming with possibility. The

dance is the patient, and the audience is the psychiatrist—and vice versa. (New York State Theater, February 3 [matinee], 7, and 8; 212-870-5570.) —N.D.

CHRYSLER

1-800-CHRYSLER

On February 18 (starting at 9 A.M. EST), the A&E Network's *Breakfast with the Arts* series will present two Operavox animated films, Mozart's *The Magic Flute* and Wagner's *Rhinegold*. Using state-of-the-art animation techniques and the music of one of the world's finest opera companies, these films bring a new accessibility to these long-established masterpieces. Chrysler is the proud sponsor of *Breakfast with the Arts* and of this edition of the Arts and Entertainment Preview.

We applied for numerous patents on it. Fortunately,
you don't have to wait for government approval to enjoy it.



TOWN & COUNTRY

The next generation Town & Country. Filled with ingenious ideas
in safety, performance and comfort. Call 1.800.CHRYSLER or log
on to www.chrysler.com. **Town & Country, the best minivan ever.***



*Based on AMCI overall weighted evaluations of 2001 Town & Country versus similarly equipped 2000 Model Year minivans. Call 1-877-PROVE-IT for details.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NOTES & DISPATCHES

WASHINGTON, D.C.

THE LOST ISLANDS

*Is the United States quietly,
mysteriously, shrinking?*

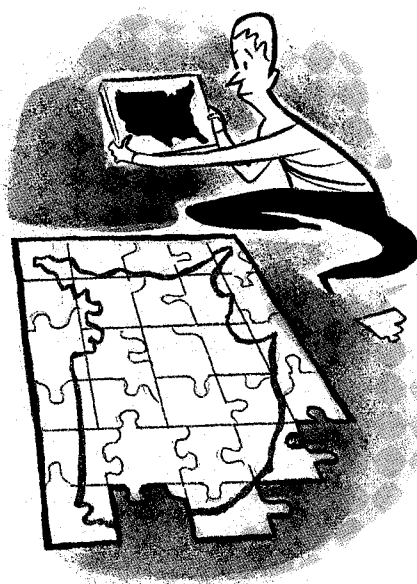
.....

It happens to everyone. People misplace things all the time—a wristwatch, a set of keys, the remote control for the VCR. That, after all, is part of being human. So it only stands to reason that the United States government, an organization composed largely of human beings, would once in a while misplace something or other. Carl Olson says that it has misplaced about 1.5 million square miles of territory.

Olson, a man whose flat midwestern accent and persistent geniality make him sound less like a political agitator than like a letter carrier in a 1950s television comedy, is the founder and chairman of State Department Watch, a small organization dedicated to, as he describes it, “following the bizarre behavior of the State Department.” But his main concern seems to be this matter of the government’s somehow “losing” a chunk of the planet the size of India and Pakistan put together. Specifically, Olson says that the government has, one way or another, let go of nearly two dozen American islands and reefs, allowing them to be claimed by other nations, including Haiti, Venezuela, Colombia, Honduras, the Cook Islands, Kiribati, and—worst of all, as far as Olson is concerned—Russia and Cuba. “Who won the Cold War anyway?” he asks.

Olson believes that the United States has lost three groups of islands: one off the coast of Alaska, one in the central Pacific, and one in the Caribbean. He asserts that some of the lost Alaskan islands—there are eight in all, including Wrangel Island, which he describes as being “the size of Delaware and Rhode

Island combined”—were acquired from Russia in the 1867 Alaska Purchase and that the rest were claimed for the United States upon their discovery, by various explorers, in 1881. Today, though, they are all claimed by Russia—something that is not contested by the United States. This bothers Olson. A lot. He filed several inquiries with the State Department and never, he says, re-



ceived a satisfactory response. Then he got creative: he wrote to the Census Bureau and asked why these islands were not included in its decennial census. He found the bureau’s response somewhat more satisfactory. “They’re actually willing to take on the State Department,” he says.

Yet Robert Marx, the chief of the Census Bureau’s Geography Division and the man who is handling Olson’s inquiries, regards the matter not with Olson’s righteous indignation but with bemused trepidation. Marx did file inquiries on the Alaskan islands—not with the State Department but with the state of Alaska. Alaska, however, confirmed that the islands do belong to Russia.

And Marx has dealt with State Department Watch before.

“This group raised a similar set of issues after the 1990 census,” he explains. “We referred the matter to the State Department, and it confirmed the boundaries and said this was a state matter. And the state of Alaska confirmed the State Department’s assessment. Alaska is perfectly comfortable with what it has, which, I guess, means there isn’t any oil there.”

“The boundary identified by the 1867 treaty,” Marx adds, “says these islands were never included in the sale of Alaskan territory to the United States of America. They were always the property of Russia.”

Olson disputes this. Three of the eight islands “are clearly part of the treaty,” he says. “And the others couldn’t have been part of the treaty, because they weren’t discovered until 1881—and claimed for the United States.” Marx argues that the fact that an American claimed an island for the United States doesn’t necessarily make it U.S. territory, but Olson counters that discovering and claiming islands for the United States was the express purpose of the 1881 expeditions. As for Alaska’s opinion, Olson points to a resolution passed in 1999 by the Alaska state legislature in which that body did claim sovereignty over the islands. “It doesn’t carry any legal weight—it’s just an expression of their opinion,” Olson admits, “but that’s a political issue. The legislature voted for it almost unanimously, but the governor and the attorney general are against it. They’re the ones with the power to do something about this, but they’re inclined to go along with whatever the State Department says.”

The rest of the islands in question, those in the Caribbean and the Pacific, were either taken by the United States

ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARCELLUS HALL

during the Spanish-American War, Olson says, or acquired under the Guano Islands Act of 1856—arguably the best-named piece of legislation in American history. The latter acquisitions, Olson explains, “contained vast bird-guano deposits, which are full of rich mineral compounds used in agricultural fertilizers.” Also at stake are many thousands of square miles of rich fishery zones and repositories of natural resources—including, quite possibly, oil. But what galls Olson the most is several Caribbean islands that, he says, were taken by the military in 1898 and not ceded to the independent nation of Cuba upon its creation, in 1902, but that inexplicably seem to belong to Cuba now. “So Castro’s got a bonus somehow,” Olson says. “Air space, economic zones, fishing rights, mineral rights.” Marx says that the Census Bureau has filed inquiries on those islands with the State Department.

But the State Department is a huge and labyrinthine organization, and finding someone there who has answers to offer—let alone getting that someone to actually offer them—is a tricky process. Marx sent his inquiries to William B. Wood, who heads the department’s Office of the Geographer and Global Issues. Wood passed them on to a staffer, Leo Dillon, who is quick to state that he cannot state very much. “Our office can only confirm that according to our records, the U.S. has no claims to any of those islands,” Dillon says. Besides, he adds, “the guano has been taken from those islands,” although he then admits he’s not sure that’s actually true. However, he does acknowledge that there are two Caribbean islands—Serranilla Bank and Bajo Nuevo—to which the United States has *not* repudiated its claim, even though other countries claim them as well. But he considers Olson’s other arguments ludicrous; and anyway, Dillon says, “we deal with sovereignty from the current, not the historical, perspective.” These were questions for the State Department’s legal division, and he has already forwarded Marx’s inquiries to that office.

The issue of the Caribbean islands was handed over to Paolo Di Rosa, at the State Department’s legal office for

Western Hemisphere affairs. Di Rosa acknowledges only that he has indeed been assigned to handle the matter and that “different islands are in a different status.” Asked about Serranilla Bank and Bajo Nuevo, he responds cryptically: “Some of these islands or banks or whatever, we have asserted sovereignty over in various international contexts, even in the face of competing claims from other countries, and we consider our claims superior.” He adds, “Some of the islands, we just have no idea where they are; they don’t appear on our geographers’ maps—we don’t know anything about them.”

Di Rosa’s counterpart at the legal office for East Asian and Pacific affairs, James Hergen, is even less specific regarding the status of the Pacific islands: “I have no position on it at all,” he states cheerfully. He has passed Olson’s inquiries on to the governments of Kiribati and the Cook Islands, he says, but “I’m still waiting to hear back.” The situation reminds him vaguely of the flap over the Alaskan islands following the 1990 census. “I don’t remember all that much about it,” he says, “but the thing that struck me is that it took up a tremendous amount of time—and taxpayers’ money.”

Hergen isn’t really angry about it, though; merely resigned and a bit leery. “Every once in a while we get into these island-type stories,” he muses, “and they’re fun, but they’re kind of spooky.” Spooky? “I don’t even know if these islands are above ground or populated or what,” he explains. “Do you know?”

It’s a good question, and one that even Carl Olson admits he cannot answer. If, as many suspect, most or even all of these islands are uninhabited and uninhabitable (if, indeed, some of them are little more than sandbars), then the most disinterested party in the whole affair, the Census Bureau, has no one to count and no reason to press its inquiries further.

But that will not stop Carl Olson from continuing to press his. Whether or not these islands are populated or even hospitable to human habitation is beside the point, in his view. “We think it’s an abuse of power by the State De-

partment,” he declares. “The public didn’t know anything about this. United States territory cannot be sold or given away to another country without a formal treaty, ratified by Congress, and there was none for any of these islands. How could numerous islands just willy-nilly float off to another country without a treaty? It seems kind of suspect.” —RICHARD RUBIN

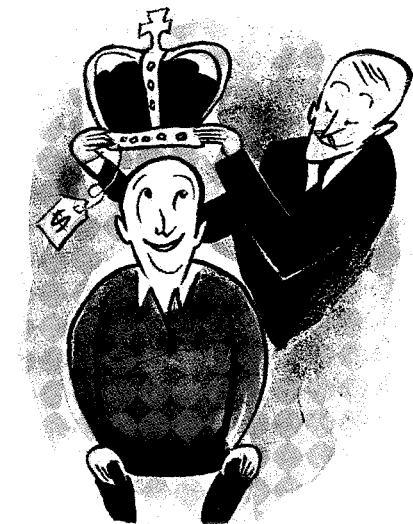
LONDON

TO THE MANOR BOUGHT

Aristocratic status is just a mouse click and a bank transfer away

.....

Ever since I moved to Europe, about eighteen months ago, I’ve been feeling my lack of nobility. Portrait galleries, stately houses, and magazines like *Hello!* and *Paris Match* constantly remind me of aristocracy’s prominence in the Old World. People who have them say titles are mostly useful for getting a table at a crowded restaurant, but the rest of us know better. Lords and ladies appear on corporate boards and royal-



wedding guest lists at a significantly higher rate than the general population. So although no one has yet turned to me at a party and asked, “Are you born?” when it happens I want to be able to say yes.

I can’t literally change my origins, of course. But being an aristocrat isn’t necessarily a matter of pedigree. Nor

need I renounce my U.S. citizenship and spend decades distinguishing myself as the subject of some European monarch. I can acquire nobility the American way—by buying it.

Exchanging money for rank is actually a well-established European practice. As Hugh Thomas (Lord Thomas of Swynnerton) wrote in *A History of the World* (1979), “From the sixteenth century, it was usually possible for the successful merchant to buy a title or otherwise make his way into the aristocracy.” Under Joseph II of Austria-Hungary “it cost 20,000 guilder to be a count, 6,000 to be a baron and 386 to be a ‘von.’” A title acquired in this way might lack the cachet of one earned by battlefield victory or strategic marriage, but not even the haughtiest of the old guard could have denied its validity.

I set out shopping for this commodity as I would for almost any other nowadays—on the Internet. When a Web search turned up the site of the London-based Burke’s Peerage (www.burkestitles.com), I knew I could stop looking. The company no longer puts out the authoritative *Burke’s Peerage and Baronetage*, which it sold off in the 1970s, but it compiles a number of genealogical volumes, and its publishing director, Harold Brooks-Baker (an American—and as yet a commoner), is the world’s most quoted expert on royalty and aristocracy. It was Brooks-Baker who revealed that Colin Powell is related to the late Princess Diana and that Bill Clinton is descended from a thirteenth-century Earl of Leicester.

Although the main business of Burke’s is genealogical research, the site announces that the firm also “locates and researches titles that may be acquired for its clients.” These titles are tied to particular pieces of real estate—sometimes less than an acre—in Scotland and France. (Of course titles exist in many other lands, too, but Burke’s doesn’t deal in them.) Whoever owns such property and can present the necessary documentation to the authorities gets to call himself noble.

A convenient online inquiry form (“in confidence and with total discretion”) offered the choice of baron, count, or marquis. On the principle

that it always pays to go first-class, I selected the highest rank and clicked on “submit.” The next day brought an e-mailed reply from Brooks-Baker himself. “The title of Marquis is rare,” he wrote, “but we are at this very moment carrying out research on three.” He phoned the following day.

Brooks-Baker, whose accent bears little trace of his residency in England (his broad *a* is simply that of a tony northeastern American), sounded much friendlier than I had expected after seeing his aloof, frowning face on the Web site. He patiently talked me through my options, and I decided to go after a marquisate in France. Some of my an-



cestors were French, whereas I have no connection to Scotland. Moreover, each French title comes with its own historic coat of arms, which seemed more glamorous—and convenient—than having to commission a new one. What clinched my decision, though, was the news that although it was too late to be listed in Burke’s Peerage’s forthcoming *Landed Gentry of Scotland*, I could still make it into the French equivalent, scheduled for publication two years hence. I pictured the volume on my coffee table, waiting to catch the eyes of visitors.

The search fee was £650 (approximately \$960), which I would get back if nothing turned up within nine months. That seemed a modest down payment on an illustrious past, so I read out my Visa number. “Marquisates are extremely rare,” Brooks-Baker reminded me. “It could take me up to a week to get back to you.”

He e-mailed me that evening with two possibilities: Removille and Badens. I chose to pursue the former, because it sounded prettier and more French. Removille is in the Vosges department of Lorraine, about seventy-five miles from the German border. The most eminent marquis had been a prince of the Holy Roman Empire, a chancellor of the Order of the Golden Fleece, and a chamberlain to the King of Poland. (Alas, none of these distinctions would come with the Burke’s package.) The family had died out in the nineteenth century—a fact that Brooks-Baker made into a selling point: “You don’t want to find yourself at a dinner party and have someone say ‘My great-great-grandfather had that land and that title.’ It would be embarrassing.”

This brought to mind a matter that had been troubling me. Although I knew that my patent of nobility would be as real as anyone’s, I also knew that snobbery doesn’t always go by the book. Was there a risk that the *ancienne noblesse* would regard me as a trifle *arriviste*?

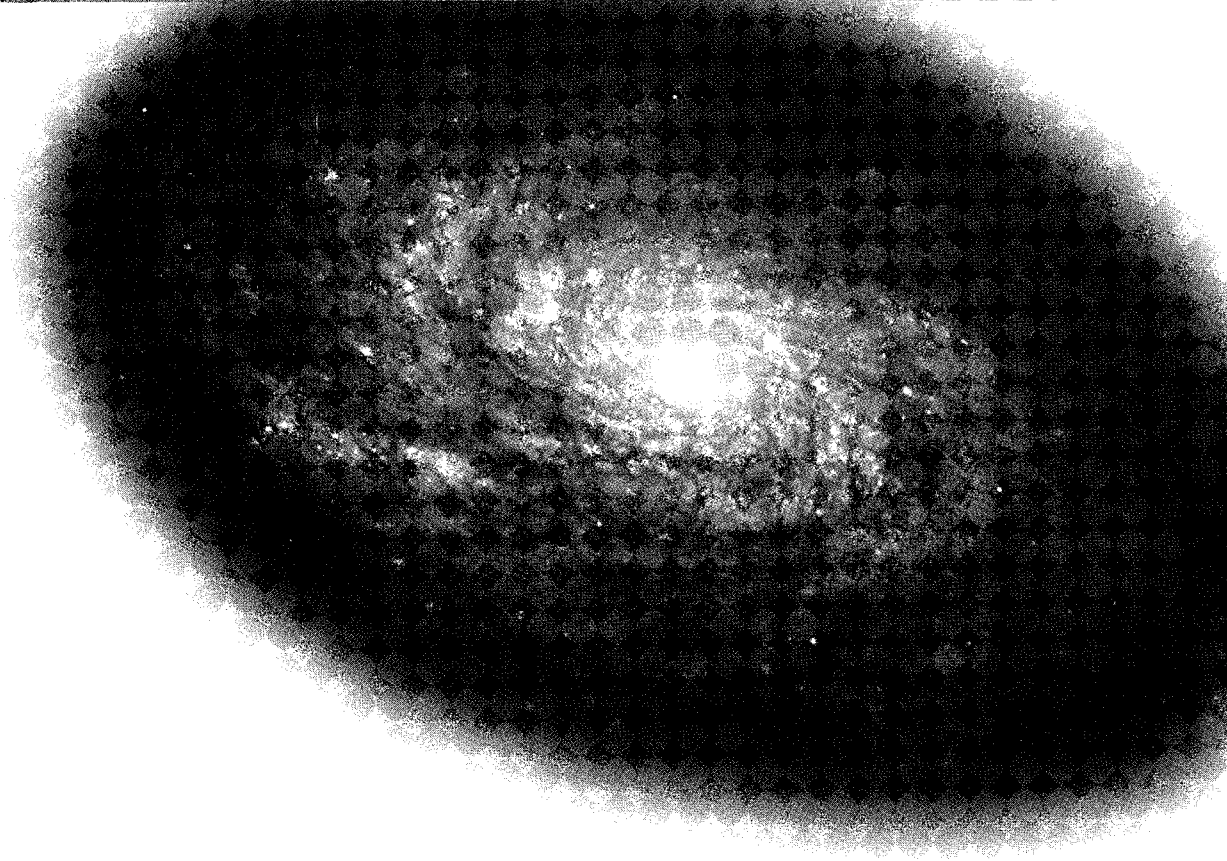
“People just assume that you inherited a title,” Brooks-Baker assured me. “Nobody knows unless you tell them” that your blood is blue owing to a cash transfusion. As he had said in our first conversation, referring to the lack of public records: “It’s all lost in the mists of time.”

Just how would I meet my new peers? Was it hard breaking into noble circles?

Brooks-Baker fielded these indiscreet inquiries tactfully: “The answer is the same as how do you get to know people anywhere. If you belong to a club, then you can meet people in the club or not meet people in the club.”

Did that mean that having a title would help me get into French clubs?

“I’ve never been asked that before,” Brooks-Baker said, clearly a bit nonplussed. After a moment’s reflection he said, “Yes, I think it would help you get into a lot of clubs.” But he cautioned me not to raise my hopes too high. “If the Count of Paris meets you, he’s not going to be terribly impressed that you’re the Marquis of Removille. But if



They say the universe is expanding. Wouldn't it be nice if your portfolio kept pace?

Unlike the universe, a steady growth in your finances won't just happen of its own accord. You need to take matters into your own hands.

We can help. TIAA-CREF has been helping people in education and research reach their financial goals for over 80 years. And now, through our group of companies, we can help everyone. Whether you're looking for mutual funds, annuities, trust services, or insurance (to name just a few), you can join the millions of people who already benefit from our long-standing commitment to strong performance, low expenses and outstanding customer service.

If you'd like to expand your horizons, call us at

1 800 842-1924 or visit us online at

www.tiaa-cref.org.



Ensuring the future for
those who shape it.SM

1 800 842-1924 dept: MXE

www.tiaa-cref.org

For more complete information on our securities products, call 1 800 842-1924 for prospectuses. Read them carefully before you invest. • TIAA-CREF Individual and Institutional Services, Inc. and Teachers Personal Investors Services, Inc. distribute securities products. • Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association (TIAA), New York, NY and TIAA-CREF Life Insurance Co., New York, NY issue insurance and annuities. • TIAA-CREF Trust Company, FSB provides trust services. • Investment products are not FDIC insured, may lose value and are not bank guaranteed. © 2000 Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association – College Retirement Equities Fund, New York, NY 12/5

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

you're asking me whether people that you meet in business who don't have titles are going to be impressed, then I would say most probably yes."

What else could one expect? Joining a new hierarchy, one doesn't usually start at the top. I sought comfort in the thought that there are a lot more plebeians than patricians out there to awe. But I can't deny that I felt somewhat disappointed.

At the same time, I was having to confront another unpleasant reality, which up till then I had managed to ignore: the price. My marquisate (as I had already begun to think of it) cost £78,000—about \$115,000. Brooks-Baker generously offered to let me pay on an installment plan, with no interest, and I was tempted to accept, the willingness to take on debt being a quintessentially aristocratic trait. It wasn't so much bourgeois prudence that kept me from succumbing as the sudden realization that I was going about this all wrong.

One may inherit a title, or earn it through conspicuous achievement, or buy it outright; but whatever the case, the point of having it is to lead a life of aristocratic leisure. Work is okay, if it's of the right kind: service in the Brigade of Guards, for instance, or philanthropy, or gentlemanly farming. Cranking out freelance articles to pay off one's marquisate bill, however, is unquestionably *infra dig*.

So it was with a heavy heart that I wrote the man who had so graciously parted the curtain onto the golden world of the chosen few, to tell him that I could not proceed.

Then, just when I had despaired of having any link to that world, I remembered another item I had seen advertised on the site. It was a humbler distinction than a title, yet probably a more useful one: the Burke's Peerage MasterCard, touted as "the most prestigious card in Europe," "the Aristocrat of credit cards." Using it, I would "immediately be associated with Burke's Peerage with all that it implies." And this was an acquisition I could justify financially, because, unlike my Visa, the Burke's Peerage card carries no annual fee. —FRANCIS X. ROCCA

YAKUTSK, RUSSIA

ESTEEMED PASSENGERS!

Searching for equanimity in the skies above Siberia

.....

Yakutsk, the capital of the Russian Republic of Sakha, in northeastern Siberia, is surrounded by nearly two million square miles of wolf-haunted forest and bear-stalked bog. No proper roads connect the city to the larger world, and the ferries that ply the adjacent Lena River, though providing a scenic and relaxing mode of travel, take seven days to reach the railhead, the settlement of Ust' Kut—when the river isn't frozen and the ferries can run at all. The only practical way into—or, as is more often fervently desired, out of—



Yakutsk is by air. Only a few airlines, however, serve the city, the largest of which is Sakha Avia, one of Aeroflot's progeny in the post-Soviet era of privatization and fragmentation. Standards of safety and service on Aeroflot, much improved in recent years, are generally acceptable, but those of its regional offspring vary widely and are of some concern to Russians who have to fly to or from the provinces.

That Sakha Avia was born of Aeroflot was all I knew about it when, at the end of a summertime visit to Yakutsk, I bought a ticket for the six-hour flight back home to Moscow. The talents of the republic's people, the Turkic Yakuts, have historically lain in herding reindeer and trapping sable, which told me little about their potential for operating jet

aircraft. But Sakha produces a quarter of the world's diamonds, and this suggested sufficient funds for the maintenance of if not a fleet of luxury 747s then at least a couple of sturdy, well-appointed Il'yushin-62s—the Russian equivalent of French Airbuses. (I later learned that my assumption was misguided: Sakha's diamond industry is rife with corruption and scandal, and the republic is heavily in debt to Moscow.)

So, ready for a more or less comfortable flight, which I hoped to pass engrossed in Charles Dickens's *Bleak House*, I arrived at Yakutsk Airport and was deposited curbside by a battered taxi. The terminal's façade, with its chipped white-marble walls and grime-streaked windows, presented a modern but prematurely aged and dismal aspect, hinting at shoddy construction and the corrosive ferocity of Sakha's -90° frosts. Inside were a dozen or so kiosks selling Snickers bars and Russian soft-porn magazines, flimsy Chinese underwear and bootleg translations of Tom Clancy. A few dozen Yakuts circulated among them, lugging nylon duffel bags and checkered plastic suitcases as they examined the goods. Their cheekbones were high and flat, their hair jet-black and lustrous.

I searched for an electronic monitor to learn the status of my flight but found none, so I went to the check-in counter. Registration was a breeze, a formality unhindered by seat assignment or the surrender of baggage: the two clerks, heavily made-up women with short frosted hair, whose lively colloquy about new Yugoslav footwear I interrupted, just glanced at my ticket and shoved a general boarding pass at me before returning to their chat. The boarding pass designated no gate, however, so I interrupted them again. One rolled her eyes and snapped, "Oh, please, just go up to the second floor!"

Upstairs I entered a cavernous marble waiting room, which I had more or less to myself, and settled in to wait for the boarding call. Hours later, having heard no announcement, I perceived a rising clamor of voices and a rush of footsteps heading my way. A crowd of chattering Yakuts and saturnine Russians (several of whom were drunk,

*Some stories can't just be told.
They must be experienced.*

**AMERICAN
EXPERIENCE**™

Abraham and Mary Lincoln. Marcus Garvey.
Supertrains and superbombs. Real stories.
Extraordinary lives. Unforgettable experiences.
Don't miss the new season of...

Sundays at 9 PM ET/PT beginning February 4 on your PBS station.
(Mondays in some viewing areas. Be sure to check local listings.)

Visit us at PBS.org AOL Keyword: PBS

Funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, Liberty Mutual, The Scotts Company  

Stay curious



PBS

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

judging by their red eyes and slurred speech) brandishing suitcases and duffels suddenly appeared at the top of the stairway and spilled into the broad expanse of the waiting room. A plump, blue-uniformed woman holding a walkie-talkie swung open the glass door to Gate 2. She waved at the crowd to make haste, and the trot across the marble steppe turned into a stampede. I walked over to make sure this commotion wasn't somehow related to my flight, but my curiosity was taken as an attempt to jump the queue. Heckled, elbowed, and bounced to the back of the



line, I asked an old Russian fellow, who seemed to understand that I had meant no harm, if this was the flight to Moscow. He winked in a friendly Russian gesture of affirmation.

Outside, a quarter of a mile down the tarmac, against a tableau of thunderhead and bog, was an old Tupolev-154M jet. Emblazoned with Cyrillic letters, it resembled a tail-heavy steel pterodactyl. Tupolev-154Ms are cramped Soviet-era planes, holding about 150 passengers, that are still sometimes used for short hops around Russia; I hadn't imagined that one would be capable of flying the 3,500 miles to Moscow. The crowd began jogging toward the plane, but the gate attendant let loose a stentorian protest.

"Esteemed passengers! Just where do you think you're going? Get back here! A bus will take you to the plane!" They circled back and sheepishly set down their bags.

The bogs around Yakutsk boast an

astounding variety of insect life, many specimens of which, from gargantuan fleshy mosquitoes to dragonlike beetles, visited us as we waited. The bugs dispersed only when enveloped by the noxious cloud of exhaust emitted by a honking, rattling fuel tanker that raced past. Minutes later an ancient Soviet municipal bus appeared, first following the route of the truck but then turning and bearing down directly upon us, stopping only at the last minute. The bus took us to the foot of a mobile staircase leading up to the aircraft. The passengers, now an anxious mob, were shoving and jostling: all 150 or so were clearly going to try to board the plane simultaneously.

A squall of damp flesh, tearing plastic, and rasping nylon propelled me through the plane's door and into the fuselage, past the empty business-class cabin and on into the economy section. The lack of assigned seats assured a scramble down the aisle, where loose bits of murky-hued carpet snagged shoes and tripped sprinters. Passengers hurled satchels, apples, and small children into the rows to claim their seats, which were upholstered in what appeared to be spare swatches of rug. Before long the ventilation system failed. We sweated, fanned ourselves with our hands, and waited.

Soon our plane pulled out of its parking space and bounced toward the main runway. As we took off, a number of overhead compartments flew open, showering jackets and plastic bags onto the heads of those below. There were many screams, but they derived from exhilaration rather than fear, and mingled with admiring *oohs* and *aahs* as we left the earth with engines roaring and wings wobbling. Clearly, many of the passengers had never been in a plane before.

In this nauseatingly close and vaguely terrifying environment I found myself turning for comfort to the *russkiy avos'* (the "Russian *just maybe*"), the almost untranslatable catchphrase and saving philosophy of Homo Sovieticus, born of helplessness before God and Stalin, before cruel winters and man-made famine, which posited a chance, just slightly better than even,

that the KGB agent shadowing him would not have divined his seditious musings, that the harvest for which he hoped would not fall prey to frost, that the plane in which he was riding would make it one last time—*this* time. Only by relying on the *avos'*—by saying to themselves, in effect, "What the hell, things will probably work out after all"—could Russians retain their sanity under circumstances of unmanageable threat and superior adversaries.

Once we had leveled off, a semblance of calm pervaded the plane. I took out *Bleak House*. London was muddy, Esther angelic, and while I was waiting for the tyrannical beadle to make his appearance, I dozed off.

Four hours later I awoke to more *oohs* and *aahs*, to our descent from the azure into the clouds. On the ground we rolled to a stop beneath the bright-blue neon SHEREMET'YEVO AIRPORT sign. The early cosmonauts, I had been told, invoked the *russkiy avos'*. And now so had I. —JEFFREY TAYLER

COLUMBUS, OHIO THE TIKI WARS

How do we distinguish the historic from the sentimental?

.....

Last June, I had dinner at the Kahiki Supper Club, in Columbus, Ohio. The food was memorable, although not necessarily in a good way. Some meals were served in carved pineapples; others crackled with eyebrow-singeing flames. (*The Columbus Dispatch* once wrote that "the Kahiki is one of the few restaurants in Columbus in which food can injure you.") From time to time a nearby table would order up a four-person flaming drink, which was delivered amid the sound of gongs by an exotic "mystery girl"—a ritual that, according to the menu, "symbolizes an ancient sacrifice, which reportedly stopped volcanoes from erupting."

I entered the Kahiki, said to be modeled after a New Guinea men's meetinghouse, between a pair of twenty-foot-high Easter Island idols with flames spouting from their heads. Inside, after crossing a low bridge and passing

through a damp grotto, I wandered into a series of dining rooms filled with thatched "dining huts." The main room, a conical structure with a towering ceiling, was presided over by an eighty-foot-high tiki goddess with glowing red eyes and a fireplace for a mouth.

No surface was unmolested. In and around the dining huts were totems, carved masks, woven grass mats, parts of ersatz shipwrecks, lamps fashioned from seashells, fountains spewing luridly tinted water, adult beverages served in skull-shaped mugs, and an assortment of lavishly varnished blowfish. Localized "thunderstorms," complete with "lightning," passed through every twenty minutes or so, drenching the tract of rain forest outside my dining-hut window.

Built in 1961, the Kahiki wasn't the first tiki restaurant in the nation (that honor goes to Don the Beachcomber's, in Hollywood, which opened in 1934), but it may have been the most elaborate. Last June, *The New York Times* dubbed the Kahiki "the grandest and best-preserved of a nearly extinct form of culinary recreation." Otto von Stroheim, the publisher of *Tiki News*, a newsletter devoted to Polynesian pop, once called the Kahiki "the first or second most important tiki restaurant in the world." In 1997 the Kahiki joined the nearly 70,000 other properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places. "I don't like to do firsts and biggests and bests and lasts," Beth Savage, an architectural historian who evaluates properties for the register, told me. "But I can say with certainty that this is the only tiki listed."

I had gone to Columbus last summer because Walgreens, the drugstore chain, had recently announced its intention to build a 15,000-square-foot store on the property occupied by the Kahiki. This plan, of course, would require the demolition of the restaurant, a fact that did not go unnoticed locally. A grassroots group (it preferred the appellation "grass-skirt group") circulated an e-mail petition to save the Kahiki. The *Dispatch* was filled with passionate letters from heartbroken residents. The newspaper editorialized against the closing.

All to no avail. It's an honor to be

Principle No. 27

MEASURE the passage of TIME by WHISKY not CLOCKS.

If you truly want to experience time, try our 18-Year Ancient Reserve, the product of an extended marriage between an oak matured whisky and one that's been matured in an Oloroso sherry cask. The resulting single malt combines undertones of oak and honey with vanillas and fruit notes. The finish is stunning.


Glenfiddich
Single Malt
SCOTCH WHISKY

FAMILY OWNED AND DOMINATED SINCE 1887

FOR ALL OF YOU WHO TRUSTED US, WILLIAM LARSEN & SONS, NEW YORK, NY, OUR FAMILY REMINDS YOU, EACH TIME YOU SKY RESPONSIBLY.

listed on the National Register, but, as with the social register, inclusion suggests more power than it actually confers. On August 26 the Kahiki served its final meal and then locked its hexagonal front door for good. The building was demolished in November.

I realize that I'm hardly alone in saying I hate it when drugstore chains razed cool old buildings and replaced them with boxy, harshly lit stores selling eyeliner and blister packs of batteries. But I found myself mustering a bit of sympathy for Walgreens in this fight. The Kahiki was, after all, a fake Polynesian restaurant that served mediocre, dangerous food and sat on an unlovely commercial strip at the frayed edge of

forward through time, we should preserve places like the Kahiki in the event we ever want to go back.

Furthermore, Wright said, tiki bars were among the original theme restaurants, dating from a time when Americans began to evince an apparently lasting appetite for the artificial over the real. And with Mount Vernon, for example, now sharing space on the National Register with the likes of the Kahiki, it becomes harder for American families to distinguish the genuine from its simulacrum. On a wall near the Kahiki's men's room I found a 1995 article from *Fortune* in which Michael Eisner, the CEO of Disney, who went to college nearby, revealed that he had attended his first drive-in movie in

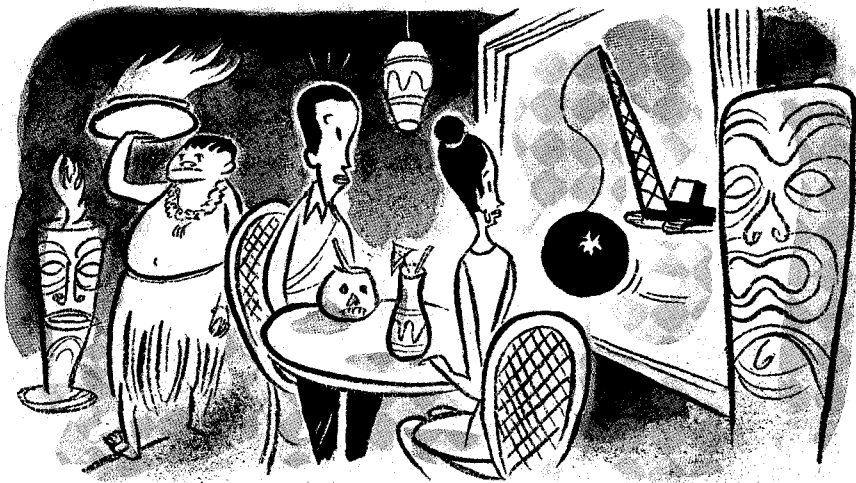
October in Philadelphia, at a conference titled "Preserving the Recent Past." The gathering, of some 850 preservationists, engineers, and architects, was largely given over to arcane technical matters—for example, how to maintain glass-curtain walls and acoustic-tile ceilings. But a more philosophical question was on everyone's mind: How do we preserve the past when faced with accelerating cycles of building and demolition? Today we destroy buildings before they've ripened. We don't allow ourselves the luxury of waiting to evaluate their historical importance. If we are to preserve the best, we need somehow to flag our landmarks for exemption from this hasty winnowing.

This is a complicated matter. Not only is it a daunting task to persuade the members of the public that buildings constructed in their lifetime are historic and worth saving, but also it requires that we sort the truly historic from the merely nostalgic.

"There's a real danger that sentiment can overtake rationality, and preservationists can be made to look ridiculous if we're not careful," says David De Long, a professor of architecture at the University of Pennsylvania. "All of us have a sentimental attachment to these things. One of the great responsibilities of those of us in preservation is to edit. It's a big responsibility. The easiest way to avoid it is to be against *any* destruction."

But what to save? Early strip malls? Subdivisions filled with tract homes? Drive-in theaters? White Castle hamburger stands? (One paper presented in Philadelphia was titled "The Ubiquitous Parking Garage: Worthy of Preservation?") After all, these are icons of the twentieth century, much as canals and carriage houses and Richardsonian Romanesque train depots are icons of the nineteenth. Isn't it important to preserve the best architectural examples of our era for our grandchildren? How do we decide which are the best?

Before the wrecking ball came in, the Kahiki's owners removed much of the interior and put it in storage. Plans call for the restaurant to reopen within two years, in a better location downtown, with the original interior. That's



the city. Its loss didn't really rank with the destruction of a Frank Lloyd Wright masterpiece or a Civil War battlefield. Then I called Nathalie Wright, the National Register coordinator at the Ohio Historic Preservation Office. She was the person responsible for nominating the Kahiki for the National Register, and when I asked her what the big deal was, she made an articulate case.

Placed in its socio-historical context, Wright argued, the Kahiki vividly recalled a time when America inhabited a sort of South Seas Camelot. Songs from the movie musical *South Pacific* (1958) were on everyone's lips, Hawaii had joined the union as the fiftieth state just two years before (1959), and Elvis was starring in *Blue Hawaii* (1961). If historic buildings serve as cairns that mark our path as we march resolutely

Columbus and enjoyed meals at the Kahiki. If there's a better contemporary version of "George Washington slept here," I don't know it.

That we're now trying to save the very places we once derided is nothing new. Queen Anne-style houses and Craftsman-style bungalows followed similar tracks: they were icons of an era which fell out of fashion and were subject to ridicule and large-scale demolition before being "discovered," dusted off, and placed on pedestals. "I call this the grandmother principle," the architect Robert Venturi has said. "You hate your mother's wedding gown in your parents' wedding photograph, but you love your grandmother's wedding gown in your grandparents' wedding photograph."

Venturi made this observation last

the good news. The bad news is that the new Kahiki certainly won't have the comfortable and dusky patina of the original place. (And it will lose its National Register listing.) It's easy to imagine the Kahiki reborn as just another "eatertainment" venue—a Rainforest Cafe with varnished blowfish.

Of course, its resurrection will also raise the question of whether the new Kahiki should one day be preserved as an example of the pervasive influence of retro kitsch on American culture. This, I'm happy to say, will be up to the next generation to decide. —WAYNE CURTIS

BELGRADE

THE CURSE OF NORMALCY

Writers in post-Milosevic Yugoslavia discover that angst no longer sells

.....

The main exhibition hall in Belgrade is a visual curiosity. A concrete-and-glass dome designed during the Tito era by an architect of great imagination, the hall looks like a flying saucer that somehow landed in the Balkans. It was an appropriate setting for Serbia's annual book fair, held late last October—an event that had a decidedly out-of-body quality. The fair's official theme, chosen before pro-democracy protesters ousted Slobodan Milosevic from power, was "2000 Years of Christianity," but the real theme, of course, was the startling events of the previous three weeks.

For Serbian writers the lifting of political tyranny has brought a new and different tyranny: that of the marketplace. Nowhere was this more evident than at the signing booth manned by Vladimir Arsenijevic, one of the country's most critically acclaimed writers. In 1994 Arsenijevic burst onto the literary scene with *In the Hold*, a novel that tells the story of a young couple in Belgrade struggling against heroin addiction as they try to find meaning, or just a reason not to give up, in a nation of madness and murder. *In the Hold* is the sort of small masterpiece that tends to emerge from horrible times. It won the

NIN prize, Yugoslavia's most prestigious literary award, in 1995, and has been translated into eighteen languages. The book turned Arsenijevic into Serbia's hottest young writer—its Dave Eggers, if you will, though a darker version, and without a movie contract.

At the fair Arsenijevic was plugging his new book, *Mexico: War Diaries*. I had imagined that he would draw a tremendous crowd: the book, which chronicles Arsenijevic's experiences during the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia and describes his friendship with an ethnic Albanian writer from Kosovo, had gotten excellent reviews. But when I stopped by his booth on the opening day of the fair, there was no signing going on; he had sold just half a dozen books in the previous four hours. Nearby, the Serbian translation of the newest Sidney Sheldon novel was selling briskly. Arsenijevic was a good sport about it all. "If normalcy means people reading Sidney Sheldon or Jackie Collins, that's fair enough," he said, shrugging.

It is an odd phenomenon that literature can be a casualty of liberation, but it's one we've seen before. Consider what occurred in Central and Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union after the Berlin Wall collapsed, in 1989. Writers and artists who had sacrificed and achieved so much under communism became, almost overnight, nonpersons (unless, as in the case of Vaclav Havel, they became politicians). Profound books that had been passed from hand to hand, often at the risk of arrest, ended up in remainder bins from Prague to Moscow. Readers did not want to be reminded of the bad old days, and the advent of democracy brought people much else to entertain themselves with, including American best sellers, the Muzak of literature. In Moscow today it is much easier to find a book by Danielle Steel than one by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, whose books are often out of print.

Under a dictatorship—whether in Communist-era Eastern Europe or in apartheid-era South Africa or in an Argentina run by generals—the mere act of acquiring certain books becomes a form of social protest. Yugoslavia had been

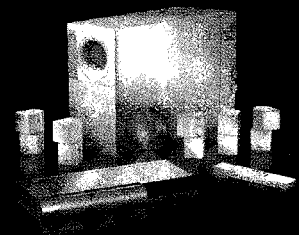
DIGITAL
WITH A DIFFERENCE™



LIFESTYLE® HOME THEATER SYSTEMS

give you 5-channel surround sound from any source — 5.1 encoded DVDs, any VHS tape, even single-channel TV shows. And only Bose®, the most respected name in sound, has the technology to deliver this performance with small size, elegance and simplicity.

To learn which system is best for your needs, or to find a dealer near you, call 1-800-ASK-BOSE ext. S14



BOSE®
Better sound through research®

ask.bose.com/ws14

©2000 Bose Corporation JN10538

The Atlantic connection

ALASKA
atm.travelalaska.com

AMERITRADE
www.ameritrade.com

BCT SCENIC WALKING
800-473-1210

BOOK SENSE
888-BOOKSENSE
www.booksense.com

BP
bp.com

BRITISH TOURIST AUTHORITY
866-684-6488

CADILLAC DEVILLE DTS
www.cadillac.com

CHRYSLER
800-CHRYSLER

DELTA
delta.com

EVINEYARD
www.evineyard.com

GMC YUKON DENALI
www.gmc.com/denali

HONDA CORPORATE
www.hondacorporate.com

LANDS' END
LandsEnd.com

**MORGAN STANLEY DEAN WITTER
FAMILY OF FUNDS**
800-THE-DEAN

NUVEEN
nuveen.com

PBS
pbs.org

PHILIP MORRIS U.S.A.
PhilipMorrisUSA.com

PHILLIPS PETROLEUM COMPANY
phillips66.com

SHELL OIL COMPANY
countonshell.com

STEAMBOAT SKI AREA
www.steamboat-ski.com

SUBARU
www.subaru.com

TIAA-CREF
www.tiaa-cref.org

TOYOTA AND THE ENVIRONMENT
www.toyota.com/ecologic

WORLD EXPLORER CRUISES
800-325-2752

CALL THE TOLL-FREE NUMBERS AND
VISIT THESE WEB SITES TODAY!
www.theatlantic.com/store

no exception, as I learned when I met with Mileta Prodanovic, a prominent writer and artist whose publisher had a booth not far from Arsenijevic's. Prodanovic told me that many people had felt "humiliated in a psychological sense" by the hypernationalism and corruption that pervaded Serbian society under Milosevic. "You would enter a book shop and buy a book to prove to yourself that you were still an intellectual or still human," he recalled. "I think this motive is going to disappear."

As it does, the pursuit of economic success may well take its place. For prosperous members of the consumer society that Yugoslavia is destined to become, the acquisition of goods will be a priority. Among the middle-class intelligentsia, dinner conversations are much likelier to focus on the merits of vacationing in Florence or Nice than on the merits of a new play by Dusan Kovacevic, the country's leading dramatist. For the large number of people who will have a difficult time in the economic transition under way in Yugoslavia (prices for food and other staples, kept low by Milosevic-era subsidies, have already shot up), the struggle to put bread and slivovitz on the table will no doubt become the dominant preoccupation. Understandably, few in such situations will want to read about their own hardships. Being poor is much less interesting—even to poor people—than being oppressed.

Oppression provides writers not only with a sympathetic, even determined, audience but also with compelling material. Normalcy represents unknown turf for authors accustomed to writing under, and about, tyranny. "You do get better inspiration when times are rough politically, and probably literature does come out with better works, because there are more questions at stake," Arsenijevic explains. "You tend to question everything, down to very personal things. But when times are not rough, you just switch off part of your mind, in a way."

Of course, I did not find any writer who mourned the passing of the Milosevic era. Kovacevic has spent more than a decade writing plays and screenplays—including the script for *Under-*

ground, an award-winning 1995 film directed by Emir Kusturica—that chronicle his country's agony. He's had enough of it. He was in one of his notoriously acerbic, whiskey-drinking moods when we met at the book fair. "In the old system it was good to be a writer but horrible to be a citizen," he remarked, pausing to enjoy the irony. "Now it's time to have a change. A boring life—that's my great wish."

But does a mundane life have to mean a literature of the mundane—more Cheever than Kundera? In hindsight, the ebb of political literature in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union



was somewhat predictable. Once communism fell, what more needed to be said about it? Communism was poison, and almost everyone knew it. In Serbia, though, the evil was nationalism, which is more a drug than a poison—and relapse is possible. Milosevic was ousted not because he led the country into four wars but because he lost the wars and brought economic ruin to his people. The atrocities committed in Bosnia, Croatia, and Kosovo are infrequently mentioned in Belgrade—and for this reason Serbia's writers, more than their counterparts in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, need to find a way to remind their compatriots of the evil in their past and the possibility that its roots live on. Selective amnesia is not

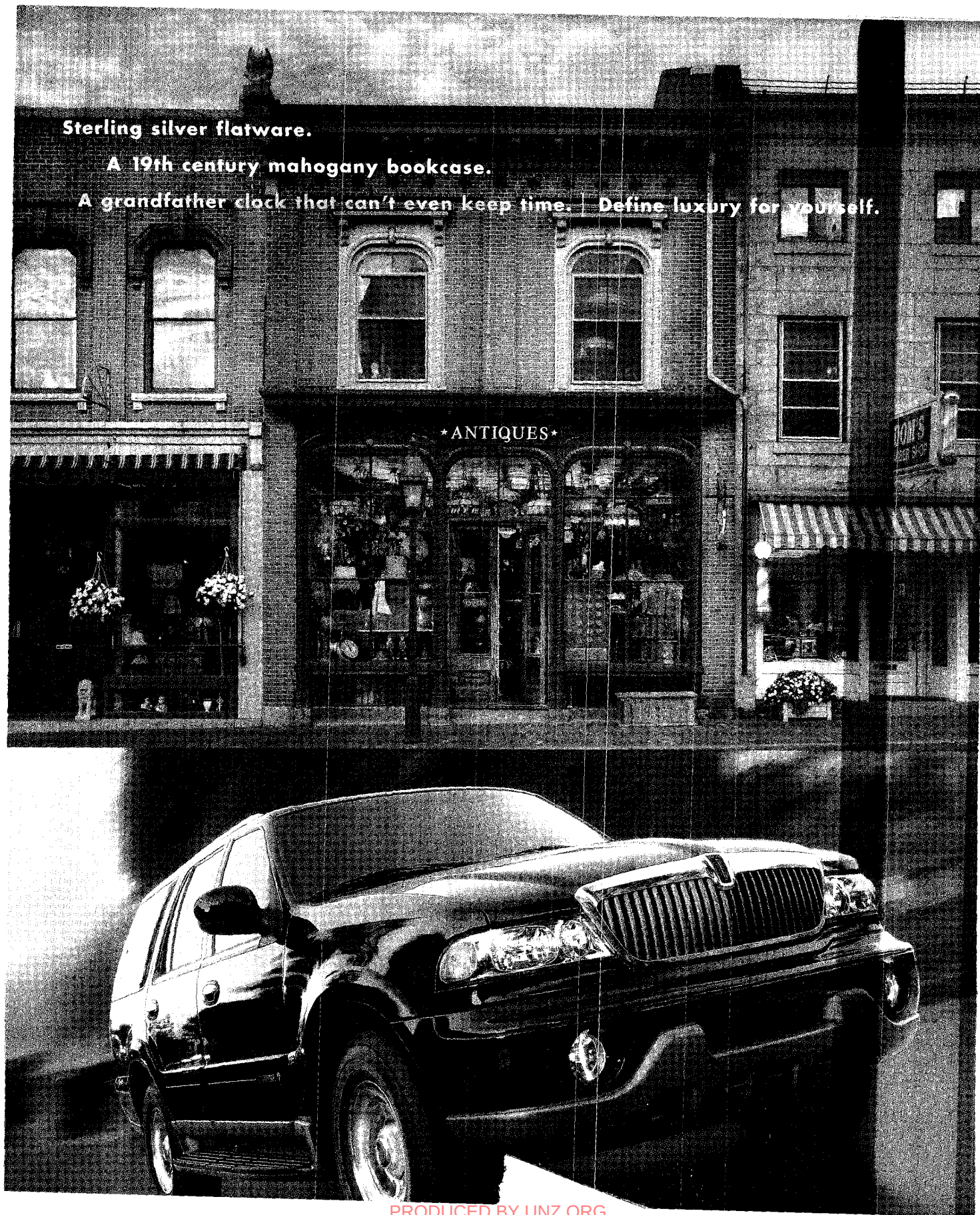
Publishing, of course, is a perilous commercial exercise in any country, let alone Serbia. Arsenijevec hopes to ensure Rende's survival through an imprint called Org. The imprint has nothing to do with the dot-com world and everything to do with commercial smarts; a certain irony also applies. When I asked Arsenijevec what "Org" stands for, he replied, "Like orgy, orgasm." The imprint's first book, which Arsenijevec hopes to release soon, is a collection of pornographic poems by a violinist at the Belgrade Opera House who is also a stripper. After the book is published, he would like to translate it into English. *Macho Shuts*, by the American poet and writer Pat Capra, was crushed by the market. Arsenijevec

PRODUCED BY UNZOR
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Sterling silver flatware.

A 19th century mahogany bookcase.

A grandfather clock that can't even keep time. | Define luxury for yourself.



BILL CLINTON AND HIS CONSEQUENCES

.....

Experts will be chewing, and gnashing, over the legacy of Bill Clinton's presidency for years to come; Clinton himself will probably participate in the assessment for three or four decades. President Clinton probably "mattered," for ill and for good, in more ways than we think, and sometimes for reasons that may not be obvious. Proud, solicitous, shameless, intellectually agile, facile and articulate, duplicitous and shrewd, selfish, empathic, by at least some measures brilliant, Clinton stands apart from, and towers above, any other politician of his generation.

During his presidency much changed. The era of politics that began with the New Deal, and defined government's role for sixty years, ended. What is now a liberal? It depends on what the meaning of "liberal" is. The President who ended welfare as we knew it, balanced the federal budget, and presided over a historic expansion of the prison population (and a historic decrease in crime rates) was no Reagan Republican but what was proudly called a New Democrat; and he set the example for an



international revolution in politics that saw New Democrats rise over older generations of conservatives to redefine liberalism in Great Britain and Germany, too. America during these years led the world in a boom that achieved the

seemingly impossible: a balanced federal budget, essentially zero unemployment, essentially zero inflation. The United States assumed the global role of keeper of the post-Cold War peace, a role guided by doctrine as yet unformed. The age of post-Watergate reforms ended: the new and unapologetically cynical boundaries for political cash harvesting that were set in the 1996 elections killed the campaign-finance laws; Kenneth Starr's investigation killed the special-prosecutor law. The practice of national politics, too, passed into a new age: the age of total war.

We asked a group of scholars, journalists, and essayists to assess some aspect of the Clinton presidency—the choice of subject matter was entirely up to them. What follows is not a debate or a roundtable but simply a collection of diverse voices expressing, as always with this President, divergent views.

Photographs by the former White House photographer Robert McNeely, from his book The Clinton Years

HE WAS SLICK, THANK GOD

Bill Clinton's talent for confounding his enemies, manipulating his friends, and playing all sides against the middle helped to create the economic golden years

BY JAMES FALLOWS

Bill Clinton's ability to compromise, adjust, "triangulate," is generally considered more impressive than admirable. Republicans have resented it as an unfair survival trick that allowed Clinton to stay in office by stealing the most-popular parts of "their" message, notably welfare reform. Liberals have seen it as a sign that Clinton could be as untrustworthy in public commitments as in some private ones. Nearly all who encountered him in office came away with similar stories: While in his presence they had had no doubt that he heard, understood, and (the crucial part) agreed with the arguments they were making. Once they went away, they found themselves wondering what it was, exactly, he had promised to do.

In the part of his record most likely to be important historically, however, Clinton's talent for compromise will seem not a gimmick but a wise strategy. Let us stipulate that the U.S. economic record of the past eight years was not perfect and that structural problems and inequalities remain. It was buoyed in part by unsustainably rapid investment in computers, the aftereffect of which may contribute to a slowdown this year. Still, something very impressive happened—more impressive than what is indicated by the standard recent discussions about why "a good economy" should have meant smooth sailing for Al Gore.

During a campaign season "the economy" really means the way the leading indicators have behaved in the preceding year—the unemployment rate above all, but also interest rates, stock-market indexes, overall inflation, and a few visible prices such as those for gasoline and food. In the longer run real economic achievements require the creation of new industries, the application of new technologies, and a consequent rise in fundamental levels of productivity and wealth. These two versions of the economy—the political and the real—are ultimately connected. Without new and more-productive industries, inflation and unemployment eventually get worse. But the politically relevant indicators can be pumped up temporarily during times of no true economic improvement, as they were during the borrowed-money booms of the late 1920s and the middle 1980s.

The surprising achievement of Bill Clinton, political genius and economic amateur, is that during his eight years truly new power—and a great deal of it—was added to the nation's economic base. Canals and nascent factories changed the United States—especially the industrial North—before the Civil War. Expanding railroads changed it there-

after—as did the assembly-line revolution at the turn of the century, the spread of motorized travel and airplanes before World War II, and the boom in the scientific-industrial complex of the postwar era.

The 1990s, I suspect, will be seen as another concentrated period in which technology, industry, and investment suddenly created new economic possibilities—a period like the 1950s, let's say, and unlike the 1970s. The Clinton years were when the information-industrial complex reached early maturity and the potential of biotechnology became impossible to ignore. Obviously, no one Administration deserves all the credit for progress that unfolds over decades. Nor does government deserve all the credit for innovations that are mainly private. But a fair reading of Clinton's influence suggests that his decisions, including several crucial compromises, made a major difference.

The most important achievement in political economy in the Clinton years was reducing the federal deficit. Just before his inauguration Clinton held an economic summit in Little Rock, at which academics, business executives, and financiers one after another moaned about how huge federal borrowing to cover debt was making capital too expensive to allow industry to grow. One year later Clinton had rammed through a tax-and-budget bill that turned a chronic deficit into a surplus.

The anti-deficit drive was controversial within the Democratic Party, because Clinton seemed to be truckling to financial markets rather than spending more for education and health. It was bitterly resisted by the Republicans; every single Republican member of Congress voted against the new taxes in the plan. It was an enormous gamble on Clinton's part: he had Al Gore cast the tie-breaking vote in the Senate. The historical judgment has to be that it paid off, for Clinton and, of vastly more importance, for the country.

"The argument that the economic health of the nation required spending political capital on deficit reduction was made in 1993 by Bob Rubin, Lloyd Bentsen, Laura Tyson, Lawrence Summers, and company," wrote J. Bradford DeLong, an economist at the University of California at Berkeley, near the end of Clinton's second term. "But it had been made back in 1983 by Martin Feldstein, David Stockman, and company. And it had been made in 1989 by Richard Darman, Michael Boskin, and company." DeLong concluded,

The difference between Bill Clinton and his predecessors lies not in the advice that he was given, but in the fact that he had the brains to understand it and the guts to follow through ... Lifting the dead weight of the deficit from the economy cost him essentially all his political capital in 1993. And the rewards in terms of faster economic growth have been greater than anyone in 1993 would have dared predict ... Economists will argue for decades to come over how much of the high-tech high productivity-growth boom we are currently

experiencing is the result of the high-investment economy produced by the elimination of the deficit. It is a welcome change from the previous sport that academic economists played, that of assigning blame for relative stagnation.

The list of advisers who guided Clinton's decision embodies the triangulation of his economic strategy: Rubin, a rich and widely respected financier whom bond traders regarded with a trust bordering on reverence; Bentsen, a relic of the days when there were conservatives within the Democratic Party; Tyson and Summers, academic economists from mildly offsetting camps within the mainstream (she of the more applied, "activist" school, having written about industrial policy; he from a "purer" theoretical background). And the most concise way to illustrate the moderation and the effectiveness of Clinton's economic program in general is with another list of names. These are appointees who both shaped and administered Clinton's policy, many of whom served for nearly his whole Administration.

Harold Varmus, the head of the National Institutes of Health for six years, and *Donna Shalala*, the Secretary of Health and Human Services for eight. After the Soviet Union collapsed, scholars had warned that the inevitable fall in U.S. military spending would hurt American research, because the Cold War defense budget had been convenient for funding high-tech laboratories of many sorts. Under Shalala and Varmus medical research became a new vehicle, as the NIH budget increased by nearly 80 percent.

Reed Hundt, the chairman of the Federal Communications Commission until 1997, and *Joel Klein*, the director of the antitrust division of the Justice Department since 1996. Every new wave of technology creates new arenas for competition and turns other markets into natural monopolies. Hundt was a main force behind the Telecommunications Act of 1996, which exposed a variety of previous monopolists—cable TV, local phone service—to competition while allowing mergers among businesses that had previously been kept apart (AT&T and cell-phone providers, for example). Klein famously led the antitrust case against Microsoft—while approving other forms of concentration (for example, AOL's merger with Time-Warner). Each approach involved trade-offs and calibration rather than easy consistency, and neither fully solved the new problems of high-tech competition; but overall each seemed reasonable for the times. Even if Microsoft wins its case on appeal, the competitive climate in high tech has already been changed by the knowledge that Microsoft met an obstacle.

Mickey Kantor and *Charlene Barshefsky*, Clinton's two special trade representatives, and *Ron Brown* and *William Daley*, two of his Secretaries of Commerce. They pulled off an intellectually complicated and politically perilous balancing act on trade policy throughout the Administration. They directly confronted their traditional supporters the la-

bor unions in pushing for NAFTA's approval and for expanded trade relations with China—but also exerted "fair trade" pressure on Japan early in the Administration and on Europe later. Trade deficits were the one indicator that got worse rather than better during the Clinton years, and the long-term problem of trade relations has hardly been solved. But trade policy displays a more intelligent balance than has obtained in at least twenty years.

Even *Ira Magaziner*, the White House adviser who took the fall for the failure of Clinton's first-year health plan, spent the last half of the Administration devising a philosophy of Internet regulation that amounted to creative non-regulation and won widespread support.

To each of these achievements there is a caveat, as there is to everything about this President. But I suspect that a long list of successors will wonder, with frustration and envy, how Clinton did it all.

James Fallows is *The Atlantic's* national correspondent.



WAS CLINTON COOL?

*Talking about my generation.
And talking and talking and talking*

BY P. J. O'ROURKE

In 1992, for the first time, a member of the sixties generation was running for President of the United States. And during that presidential campaign the measure of the man was taken on a sixties yardstick of hip and cool. Ur-hip, echt-cool *Rolling Stone* magazine, the sixties' most influential and durable media voice, conducted a group interview (how sixties) with Governor Bill Clinton in Little Rock. The interviewers were Jann Wenner, who, as the founder and owner of *Rolling Stone*, had been the arbiter of what was hip and what was cool for twenty-odd years; William Greider, the hip leftish political journalist who had quit *The Washington Post* to prove to *Rolling Stone* readers how hip and cool engagement with practical politics could be; Hunter S. Thompson, hipness and coolness itself; and I. Never mind that by 1992 I was over the sixties, wore neckties by preference, and stared with dreamy transfixion for hours at the stock-market ticker rather than the lava lamp, and that my illegal drug of choice was a Cohiba. No member of the sixties generation ever fully recovers from hip and cool.

We met Governor Clinton at hip, cool (well, hip and cool for Little Rock) Doe's restaurant. He was laid-back. He was out-front. We asked him a question that we felt no other presidential candidate in the history of America had ever properly answered: "Who's your favorite Beatle?"

There were four aspects—"avatars," we used to say—to

the sixties. Each idea or event of the period seemed to have the nature of one of the Beatles: John Lennon, George Harrison, Ringo Starr, or Paul McCartney. That is, everything in the sixties was either brilliant but troubled, earnest but flaky, stupid, or Paul McCartney.

"Paul McCartney," Clinton said.

Hunter Thompson had brought Clinton a present, a saxophone reed of some especially cool and hip type. Hunter explained to the first President of our generation the very hip, cool provenance of this thing. Clinton looked blank.

First Paul McCartney, then the saxophone. Was the whole saxophone thing just an affectation? And the Ray-Ban Wayfarers and the bluesman's snap-brim fez too? Would Clinton really go out on the Truman Balcony and blow some bebop if things got rough during his White House sojourn? Or ... was Clinton a band geek? Maybe he got the saxophone because the tuba was already taken. Even in the sixties there were such people—sycophantic mama's boys who tended toward pudge and hung around the career counselor's office asking "You got any of those Rhodes scholarship application things?" These fellows tended to marry the girls who helped them with their law-school homework, move back to town, and turn out to be real operators.

No, no, we told ourselves. Clinton had dodged the draft. Really dodged it. Did everything but show up at the draft physical wearing a cashmere twin set with cultured pearls. He was one of us. It's just that we were riffing on him, and he didn't dig it. He was, as we said in the old days, "heavy into things." (He did eat an awful lot of french fries during the interview.) Clinton wanted to talk about issues, policies, programs.

And talk he did. Brilliantly. He had all the details. He knew the facts and figures. This was amazing to us hipsters. Here was somebody who had been listening in class while the rest of us were trying to calculate to the centimeter how short a miniskirt had to be before the Tri-Delt in the next row was sitting on nothing at all. But Clinton was known to let it all hang out in the skirt department, too. Groovy.

Clinton kept talking. It seemed he'd done reading for extra credit besides. And he was able to remember something from dorm bull sessions other than how to build a beer bong. He was a regular *Whole Earth Catalog* of political ideas: a health-care system with the infinite efficiency of a solar-powered wigwam; a reinvention of government as mind-blowingly original as the geodesic dome; the greening of America with an ecologically oriented national-service program that would make Woodstock look like merely a music concert in the mud. He explained. He gave examples. And he knew what he was talking about—until he talked about something I knew.

I'd just been to Bangladesh, where I had toured the Grameen Bank, founded by the Third World development guru Muhammad Yunus. Clinton proposed using the

Grameen's programs of microcredit and cooperative lending to fight poverty in American inner cities. The Grameen Bank lends \$30 or \$40 to groups of Bangladeshi village women so that they can buy pedal-operated sewing machines to make napkins, place mats, and decorative pillow cases to sell to tourists, in case Bangladesh ever gets any. I had a hard time picturing this in Compton or the South Bronx. Also, the crack fad was raging just then. Enormous drug deals were being transacted in the nation's slums. Was scarcity of capital really at the core of America's poverty problems? When Clinton finished talking about microcredit, I said, "I've just been to Bangladesh, where I toured the Grameen ..."

There was a sudden great changing of subject. And doubtless there have been many such sudden changings of subject in subsequent interviews with subsequent interviewers who just happened to know something about socialized medicine, voluntary service of a mandatory nature, random shuffling of government bureaucracies, incoherent foreign policy, gays in the military, peace in the Middle East, and the rest of the issues, policies, and programs of an eventful Administration during which nothing much was accomplished.

Maybe Clinton really *didn't* inhale. It was easy, for a moment, while he was hurriedly changing the subject, to picture him cross-legged in a circle of graduate students, making narclike fake sucking noises and hurriedly passing the joint. But it is wrong to doubt Clinton's sixties bona fides. He *is* one of us; in fact, he is a perfectly fitting first-President-of-our-generation one of us. The noise, sex, and dope smoke of the sixties are what is remembered, but mind-numbing earnestness and self-congratulatory sincerity were the true hallmarks of the era. (Think George Harrison.) And who, ever, is more earnest and more sincere than our own band geek? Clinton can grok. He puts a warm and guileless lock on your eyes, responds to your every gesture and expression, and concentrates so intently on you that you just know he's caring in his innermost being and you're sharing in his innermost thoughts.

The problem, it seemed to me on that day, was that Clinton is a little haphazard at picking what to care about and whom to share it with. (This turned out to be, as insights go, an understatement.) He had made an unlucky Vulcan mind-meld with me on the subject of Bangladesh. And then he turned to Hunter Thompson, of all people, and said with wholehearted fervor, "We're going to put one hundred thousand new police officers on the street."

I was up all night persuading Hunter that this was not a personal threat. Well, with Hunter one is going to be up all night anyway. But that was not a cool thing to say to the good Doctor, or a hip thing. Churchill was cooler than that. FDR was hipper. And if they had made this mistake, they would have noticed, and would have bowled for the spare. Churchill would have bought drinks until dawn. FDR



When leukemia
laid him low,
biotechnology
helped get him up
and running again.

"I'm back at school. Back with my friends. I'm playing goalie this year!..."

—Matthew Whitaker, 2nd grader

Six years ago, Matthew Whitaker was diagnosed with leukemia. Matthew loved to run, but the disease left him weak and tired. Now, thanks to a medicine developed using biotechnology, his disease is in remission. And Matthew is back in the race.

Today biotechnology is helping to create more effective medicines for diseases such as leukemia. And it's improving lives in other ways.

Biotechnology allows farmers to choose the best combination of ways to help grow their crops. It helps cotton farmers use fewer chemicals to protect against certain pests, and is providing ways for developing countries to better feed a growing population. And, in the future, it can help farmers grow better quality, more nutritious food.

Biotechnology is helping create solutions that are improving lives today and solutions that could improve our world tomorrow. If you're interested in learning more, visit our Web site or call the number below for a free brochure about biotechnology and agriculture.

COUNCIL FOR
BIOTECHNOLOGY
INFORMATION

good ideas are growing

1-800-980-8660
www.whybiotech.com

would have swapped cigarette holders and let Hunter play with his wheelchair. Clinton went home to the governor's mansion, probably to check polling data.

And yet, we told ourselves, electing *any* member of the sixties generation to the presidency would mean a (dared we say it?) revolution—plus a big difference in who got invited to perform at the White House. Wings was better than nothing.

Politics would never be the same. Our generation was too cool to get involved in the grubby little squabbles of partisan bickering. We were too hip to spend all our time thinking about Squaresville economics, too above-it-all for endless logrolling, highbiding, and petty graft. For sure we wouldn't send troops off to someplace we'd never heard of for no discernible reason. And with our healthy lack of inhibitions and our sexually liberated attitudes, we would certainly not have an Administration remembered mainly for the kind of twisted and repressed behavior in which our parents indulged, culminating in some sordid dad-with-the-baby-sitter scene that caused an ugly divorce—or, rather, a lack of an ugly divorce, because our parents were members of the *fifties* generation, so they stayed together without ever speaking another civil word to each other, for the sake of the kid and also so that the family business didn't have to be busted up.

There'd be none of that. What's more, by 1996, or 2000 at the latest, *all* presidential candidates would be members of the sixties generation. And then *everything* would be hip and cool.

P.J. O'Rourke is a writer for Rolling Stone. His most recent book is Eat the Rich (1998).



THE TRIUMPH OF ROBUST TOKENISM

Clinton's racial strategy helped mainly those who had already helped themselves

BY RANDALL KENNEDY

What has William Jefferson Clinton, the master of American electoral politics over the past decade, done to and for race relations? The record, of course, is as mixed as the rest of his legacy.

To his great political benefit, Clinton managed simultaneously to appeal to Reagan Democrat whites who were impatient with ongoing complaints about racial injustice and to Maxine Waters-style blacks who were insistent that more must be done to redress past and present racial inequities. This political balancing act played a large role in enabling him to win the White House in 1992, to outlast the Gingrich Revolution of 1994, to overcome the Bob Dole

challenge of 1996, and to weather the Monica Lewinsky embarrassment of 1998.

Clinton's strategy was two-pronged. One prong entailed assuaging fears that "progressive" politicians who attempt to be sensitive to the wrongs of racism will give away too much to racial minorities, particularly blacks. Clinton took this approach in his 1992 campaign when he decided to upstage Jesse Jackson at a forum Jackson had organized—a meeting of the Rainbow Coalition, his personal fiefdom. One of Jackson's guests was a young rap artist, Sister Souljah, who had made remarks to the press suggesting that it would be preferable for black criminals to prey on whites rather than on their racial kin. Clinton seized the opportunity to condemn Sister Souljah. Although he did so before an immediate audience that was mainly black, the audience he plainly had in mind was impressionable whites. He wanted to show them that he could stand up to blacks on their own turf and rebuff black guilt-tripping and mau-mauing. An array of black politicians and commentators assailed Clinton for "disrespecting" his host. But their highly public anger played right into Clinton's strategy: the more vociferous their denunciation, the more credibly Clinton could signal to white Reagan Democrats that he was courageously willing to offend his black allies, even if doing so cost him politically—though, of course, standing up to them was precisely the politic thing to do.

As President, Clinton made sure to insulate himself periodically against the charge that on matters of race he was too soft. This largely explains his sermons in black churches castigating illegitimacy, criminality, and other moral failings (this from the man who would give us the infamous blue dress); his signing of a welfare bill that was overwhelmingly opposed by the Congressional Black Caucus; and his refusal to speak up in favor of relaxing the draconian drug laws that have had an egregiously disproportionate and destructive impact on black communities. This calculation also explains Clinton's continuing support for capital punishment even though it is obvious that racial selectivity plays a major (albeit subtle) role in determining who are the unlucky few the State deems fit to kill.

The second prong of Clinton's strategy involved persuading influential black leaders—the CBC, the NAACP, black preachers—that ultimately he was on their side, that he felt their pain and shared their aspirations, that he sincerely liked them and was willing to display a fond association with them before the white American public. To accomplish this aim Clinton did several important things. He defended affirmative action—the one program that black activists see as indispensable and non-negotiable. He appointed blacks to high office, including positions above those commonly associated with African-Americans. He made it clear to everyone—through attendance at black churches, walks in black neighborhoods, highly public friendships with black people—that he enjoys the presence



and ways of black folk. He visited Africa. And he created and hosted occasions aimed at making amends for America's past racial sins. These occasions generated enormously moving (and politically safe) moments, such as the one in which he apologized for the infamous Tuskegee syphilis experiment and the one in which he awarded Medals of Honor to black veterans whose heroism had previously been ignored. It is because of these measures and because of the paucity of such gestures from political rivals that Clinton has won the enthusiastic loyalty and deep affection of many blacks.

Though Clinton's racial strategy has been good for him, has it, on balance, been good for the country? The answer is by no means clear. For all of Clinton's much-expressed concern about social justice in general and racial justice in particular, his programs, policies, and gestures have done painfully little to help those whom Professor William Julius Wilson calls "the truly disadvantaged"—impoverished people, disproportionately colored, who are locked away in pestilent and crime-ridden inner cities or forgotten rural or small-town wastelands, people who are bereft of the money, training, skills, or education needed to escape their plight. True, Clinton had to contend with a reactionary, Republican-led Congress for much of his presidency. But even before the Gingrichian deluge of 1994 he had made it plain that his sympathies lay predominantly with "the middle class." For those below it, he offered chastising lectures that legitimated the essentially conservative notion that the predicament of the poor results primarily from their own conduct and not from the deformative deprivations imposed on them by a grievously unfair social order that is in large

part a class hierarchy and in smaller part a pigmentocracy.

In 1997 Clinton initiated a "conversation on race" and created a commission chaired by Professor John Hope Franklin to oversee the envisioned discussions. Rather quickly, however, the initiative displayed the parochial, shallow self-servingness that besmirches all too much of Clinton's talk about race relations. Portrayed as an effort at dialogue, the President's conversation was from the beginning a tightly scripted monologue that regurgitated familiar nostrums while avoiding discussion of real problems. Compared with the reports and agendas on race relations produced by commissions established by Harry Truman in 1946 and Lyndon Johnson in 1967, the report and agenda produced by Clinton's commission are laughable. Does this matter? Any highly public action taken by a President matters. Because of Clinton's conversation and its embarrassing end, a long time will have to pass before another President invests personal and political capital in pressing for public education about the American race question.

Clinton's main bequest to race relations is that he helped to sustain and accelerate the desegregation of the higher circles of American life. On the psychological plane he has gently pushed the white American public to accept something that for many whites is still more in question than one would like to believe: that blacks really can be equal or even superior to whites in performing the most crucial and difficult tasks demanded by our society. President George Bush contributed to this process in a major way when he selected General Colin Powell to be Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Through his appointment

of blacks and genuine friendships with blacks, Clinton has deepened this tendency in American life. To a large extent, desegregation remains at the primitive level of mere tokenism. But compared with exclusion, robust tokenism, though far from enough, is a step in the right direction.

Randall Kennedy is a professor at Harvard Law School.



ALL THE PRESIDENT'S SIDEMEN

Savvy enough about rhythm

BY FRANCIS DAVIS

Did I just hear the President of the United States say something about free jazz?" I asked the reporter standing next to me at the 1993 White House Jazz Festival. Clinton had included the esoteric reference in a speech—mostly boilerplate—about the evolution of jazz from "ragtime and boogie-woogie and swing and bebop and cool" and so forth. Was it possible that he drove Hillary and Chelsea crazy by blasting discordant music by Ornette Coleman and Albert Ayler at all hours? Probably it meant simply that he had some pretty hip speechwriters. Sitting a few feet from the stage at a table with the First Lady and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Clinton seemed not to notice when the pianist Herbie Hancock and the singer Bobby McFerrin, doing Horace Silver's "Peace," momentarily seemed to be performing two different numbers. Was he just being diplomatic? How much did he really know about jazz?



Say this for him—he was probably the first President savvy enough about rhythm to know to weave his shoulders to the bass while tapping his foot to the drums.

Power is seductive—never more so than when it is invested in someone who seems to share many of one's cultural reference points. The musicians on the South Lawn that night unequivocally adored Clinton. Some of them, including a bassist active in leftist political causes and a drummer who had done time for narcotics, would not have been allowed near the White House under previous Administrations. As everyone knew he would, Clinton participated in the closing jam session, borrowing a saxophone from Illinois Jacquet to join the huddle of horns behind the singer Joe Williams on two blues numbers. Not one musician I spoke to afterward had the heart to say that Clinton flat-out couldn't play; putting it as nicely as they knew how, they said he had a "light" tone.

I happened to be talking to Jacquet when an aide returned his horn to him. Learning that I was the same age as his friend Bill, Jacquet, who was then seventy, looked me in the eye and solemnly told me that the future of this country was in the hands of "young men" like me and the President. I know that only politicians can rightfully be called young in their late forties, but still, I was flattered to be mentioned in the same breath.

Francis Davis is a contributing editor of The Atlantic. He is working on a book about John Coltrane.



CLASS AND THE CLASSROOM

The 1990s were the time when "public education" lost its hold on our hearts

BY MARGARET TALBOT

In 1976, when Jimmy Carter moved his family from Plains, Georgia, to Washington, D.C., it went without saying that his nine-year-old daughter, Amy, would attend a public school. Early in his campaign Carter had more or less promised that no child of his would be found sashaying through the halls of an elite prep school. After all, he was running as a homespun outsider; and as a matter of practical politics, the teachers' unions would certainly have regarded a decision to send Amy to private school as a betrayal, and would have punished Carter for it. But it went deeper than that. Universal public education still held an unquestioned place in the liberal catechism—as a social leveler, a cherished legacy of the Progressive era, a cornerstone of democracy, and so on. A liberal President—any President, in fact—had little choice but to live as though he believed in it.

In 1992, when Bill and Hillary Clinton enrolled their twelve-year-old daughter, Chelsea, at Sidwell Friends, an intensely selective if not especially posh Quaker school in Northwest Washington, D.C., they weathered little criticism for their decision. It was a different world already. But it was still one in which liberal elites agonized publicly about choosing to send their children to private school. Affluent professionals who were unwilling to sacrifice the buzz and sheen of city life—the latte joint on the corner, the museum downtown, the Babel on the subway—were pulling their kids out of the deteriorating public schools in their neighborhoods, but many of them felt guilty about it. Their guilt was common conversational coin, and there was much self-vindicating talk about “not sacrificing your children on the altar of your principles.”

And in 2001? It’s hard, honestly, to imagine any politician’s incurring serious political damage because of a decision to send his or her children to private school—or, for that matter, because of a weak commitment to public education. Fealty to the ideal of public school is no longer a litmus test, even for most Democrats. Half a century from now the Clinton years may be remembered as the years when public education lost its hold on American hearts and minds—a transformation as profound as it was unintended.

The evidence for this shift is everywhere. Over the past decade enrollment in private schools has increased by 19 percent, and waiting lists for the most popular have grown absurdly long. Meanwhile, voucher plans, which fund private school tuition, have steadily attracted broad and increasingly bipartisan support.

That support is still tentative and does not necessarily translate into political victory. In November voters in California and Michigan overwhelmingly rejected voucher propositions. Still, the degree to which support has grown in recent years—and grown across traditional political lines—is striking. Conservatives pioneered the use of vouchers, but the first voucher plan, under which public money subsidized tuition for low-income children at private schools, started in a traditionally progressive city, Milwaukee, in 1990. By 1999, 60 percent of all African-Americans and 72 percent of those earning less than \$15,000 a year favored vouchers, according to a study by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. And as more upper-class parents send their children to private schools, or move to the suburbs for the functional public schools there, it becomes less tenable, morally speaking, to deny inner-city parents the same option. “What the best and wisest parent wants for his child,” John Dewey once wrote, “must be what the community wants for all of its children. Any other ideal for our schools is narrow and unlovely; it destroys our democracy.” If parents who can afford it routinely seek private educations for little Hannah and Dylan, signing up their three-year-olds for IQ tests and assembling résumés for their four-year-olds, the message is clear: this is the ed-

ucation option you take if you can possibly get it. Even the language of the discussion has undergone a subtle change—one that seems to put public education on the defensive. Private schools are now more generally referred to as they like to refer to themselves—not as private but as “independent.” Meanwhile, even some Democrats (one such is the Milwaukee mayor and voucher advocate John Norquist) call public schools by the coyly pejorative term the Christian right prefers: “government schools.”

None of this occurred by design. It wasn’t as though Clinton came to office vowing to undermine public education. Things just sort of happened that way. The economy kept making middle-class people rich and upper-middle-class people very, very rich, and one of the first things the newly prosperous did with all that excess income was to buy tuition for their children at heavily endowed private schools with small classes and beautiful new libraries and field trips to Costa Rica. Many other people who might have cared about the fate of public schools in the cities didn’t care so much anymore, because they themselves had decamped for the suburbs, where public schools can still rely on fat tax bases to subsidize new gyms and pay art teachers. Suburbanites are not a demographically coherent group, and they do not vote as a bloc; their political values range from NPR-liberal to Fox-conservative. But it is reasonable for the practical politician to bet that people who live in the suburbs share a less passionate commitment to the Progressive ideal of decent city schools than did their urban predecessors. They may care deeply about their local public school, but they don’t necessarily care about public schools in general. And when suburbanites make up the majority, it is reasonable for the practical politician to assume that this shared view is the majority view.

The constituency for public schooling seemed by the early nineties to be dwindling to education bureaucrats and teachers’-union lifers. The idea of defending public schools as a cornerstone of democracy just didn’t smell like a winner. Moreover, education reform was not a priority in this Administration—not like remaking the health-care system or ending welfare as we knew it or eliminating the deficit. And New Democrat rhetoric helped to create a political atmosphere in which one of the basic conservative arguments for vouchers—that they would introduce competition into a monopoly—sounded naturally right.

And it may be right. It may be that lousy public schools will get better only if they lose their best students and most committed parents to voucher-funded private schools, and have to hustle not to lose the rest. Even if that doesn’t happen in the long run, and even if there will never be enough private schools to serve all the students—at every conceivable level of ability and lack of it—that public schools do, vouchers may in the short run at least secure safe and decent educations for some determined kids in some cities. Many Catholic schools—the private schools that most parents with vouchers

can afford—seem to do a better job of turning disadvantaged kids into college-bound students than public schools have done in recent years. In one 1990 survey, for example, 66 percent of high school sophomores in Catholic schools, but just 39 percent of their public school counterparts, were on the pre-college track. The voucher movement may yet give rise to a more democratic variant, such as the one proposed by the education reformer Diane Ravitch: a comprehensive program of means-tested scholarships for needy elementary, middle, and high school students. The expansion of school choice—that elastic term that embraces home schooling, public charter and magnet schools, parochial and secular private schools, and old-style neighborhood schools, together constituting a patchwork, not a system—may ultimately hold the brightest promise for meeting the needs of most families in a more or less equitable way.

But none of this will be accomplished without a loss—one we haven't yet begun to reckon with. If the public school ideal continues to weaken, marketplace values will establish more of a grasp on education than ever before. Already some private schools are besieged by parents who see themselves as consumers of an expensive product and who are determined to get their money's worth. Moreover, private schools tend to serve people of similar social class and—because their curricula are often more focused and their identities more specialized than those of comprehensive public schools—similar outlook. The public school ideal was not only about guaranteeing a minimally decent education for all. It was also about the mixing of social classes, which it fostered not by artificial attempts at diversity—the punctil-

ious handpicking of students—but organically. Who in our new gilded age even cares about such a thing?

Margaret Talbot is a contributing writer at The New York Times Magazine and a fellow at the New America Foundation.



THE RETURN OF THE “UNDESERVING POOR”

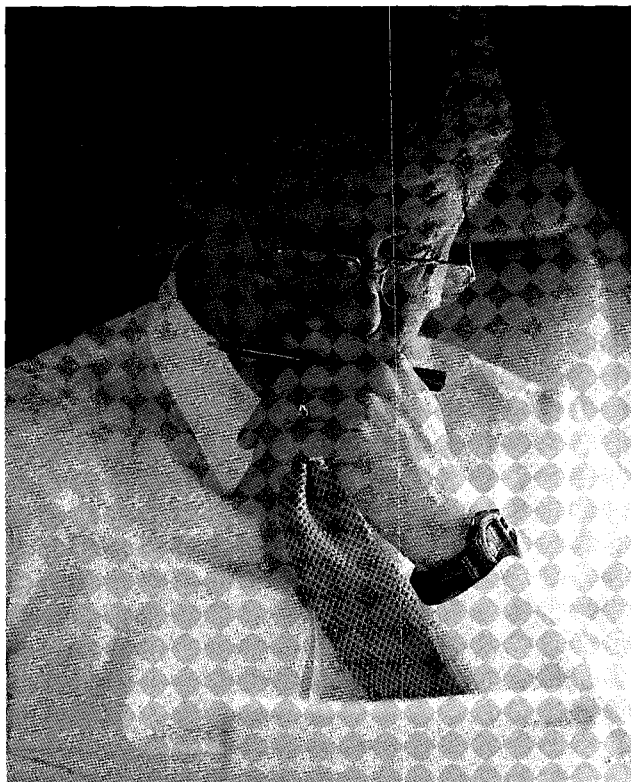
Welfare reform revived a hateful notion

BY GLENN C. LOURY

The successful two-term Clinton presidency has left the Democratic Party in a position to compete effectively with Republicans over the next decade in the ongoing struggle to define our nation's agenda for collective action. That is its most significant political legacy. After the ideological shift rightward during the Reagan years, and in the wake of humiliating national defeats for Walter Mondale and Michael Dukakis, Bill Clinton managed to recast the Democratic message so that it once again resonates with the sentiments of a majority of American voters. He moved the party toward the center, for the most part quieted its radical left wing, and, using a combination of center-right social-policy initiatives (on welfare and crime, for instance), clearly signaled the Democrats' endorsement of values widely held in the electorate at large.

To be sure, this strategy was aided by the good fortune of an unprecedented economic expansion. And it was powerfully abetted by the incompetence of Clinton's political opponents, who failed to understand that this country is far less ideological and (thank God!) much less self-righteous than is the right wing of the Republican Party. Even so, this repositioning of the unwieldy coalition of interests that constitutes the national Democratic Party has been a very impressive act to watch.

There is, however, an obvious problem in such repositioning. When not tempered by an uncompromising adherence to core principles, efforts to co-opt conservative rhetoric on social issues are not very different from capitulating to conservative values on social issues. That the death penalty is popular does not make it right. That middle-class taxpayers resent the giving of public money to unwed, unemployed, uneducated young mothers does not mean that such resentment is justified in the richest country on earth. That parents fear the prospect of drug use by their children does not make the War on Drugs good social policy. The Clinton presidency, while beating a full retreat from the “liberal ideology” that so plagued the Democrats in national politics during the 1980s, has also managed to



confer an undeserved legitimacy on some widely held but not commendable notions about American social life. This, too, is a part of its legacy: self-consciously progressive political rhetoric has been essentially banished from the top of the Democratic Party.

As one example of this process, consider the public discussion of welfare policy. Clinton campaigned in 1992 on a promise to “end welfare as we know it.” In this way he inoculated himself against the charge of being an old-style liberal Democrat seeking to protect the welfare status quo. Clinton’s original plan was, in my view, a good one—but it never had a chance. When, after a protracted struggle with Republican majorities in Congress, a welfare-reform act was passed and signed into law in 1996, it initiated one of the most far-reaching conservative shifts in social policy in the post-New Deal era. The federal entitlement of indigent children to public support was terminated. Strict work requirements for recipients of assistance were put in place, and time limits were imposed on eligibility for assistance. Such a policy seemed to abandon the most vulnerable of our fellow citizens. Peter Edelman [see “The Worst Thing Bill Clinton Has Done,” March, 1997, *Atlantic*], one of several Clinton appointees to resign in protest over the signing of that bill, made a crucial point: much of welfare policy is really better thought of as disability policy. One third of the welfare case load involves some disability in either mothers or children; a third to a half of adult recipients seem to be unemployable, given that in the best “supported work” experiments many were still jobless despite three years of concerted searching. A great number of these folks are socially, psychologically, physically, or mentally impaired. Young children are involved. Why should our response to them properly be conceived along the single dimension of work?

This policy was due neither to historical inevitability nor to intellectual necessity. Rather, it was the result of political expediency. “Workfare” became the salable rejoinder to conservatives’ anti-welfare rhetoric. The Democrats’ mantra became “If you work hard and play by the rules, you shouldn’t be poor.” But where does that leave the great number of people who are unable (or unwilling) to “work hard and play by the rules”? By implication, they (and their children) deserve to be poor. In other words, the conservative distinction between “deserving” and “undeserving” poor people has now been written into national policy—and by a Democratic Administration. A line of argument that started with the idea that everyone should pull his or her own weight has ended with a five-year lifetime limit on receipt of federal support for millions of indigent families incapable of supporting themselves.

Of course, defenders of the reform process can cite declining welfare rolls and relatively high employment rates among previous recipients. But here, again, the sheer good luck of an extraordinary economic climate must be kept in mind. Clinton has presided over a huge change in the struc-

ture of our anti-poverty policy. Much greater importance is now being placed on earnings relative to transfers. Little remarked is the fact that this policy shift has left low-income American families much more vulnerable to an inevitable rise in unemployment.

All of this leads me to regret the diminution of ideological (as distinct from partisan political) fervor that one must, I think, associate with the Clinton presidency. Crime rates are down, and the President takes due credit. Be it noted, however, that incarceration rates have continued to soar over the past eight years, growing at roughly the same rate during Clinton’s presidency as during Ronald Reagan’s. (The number of people in local, state, and federal custody on a given day has essentially quadrupled since 1980.) We are fast becoming a nation of jailers. Our major public outreach to impoverished, ill-educated young men occurs within this vast corrections establishment. Now, defenders of President Clinton would no doubt deny that the vast expansion of imprisonment that has taken place on his watch, alongside a comparable growth in our economic well-being, should be counted as part of his legacy. The point is debatable. What is beyond doubt, however, is that he has done precious little to awaken in the American people a sense of disquiet about it. Indeed, to the contrary, and in keeping with his grand political strategy, he has on occasion pandered to base public sentiments. That most certainly *is* a part of his legacy. And it does not look like progress to me.

Glenn C. Loury is a professor of economics and the director of the Institute on Race and Social Division at Boston University.



RELATIVISM AS TEFLON

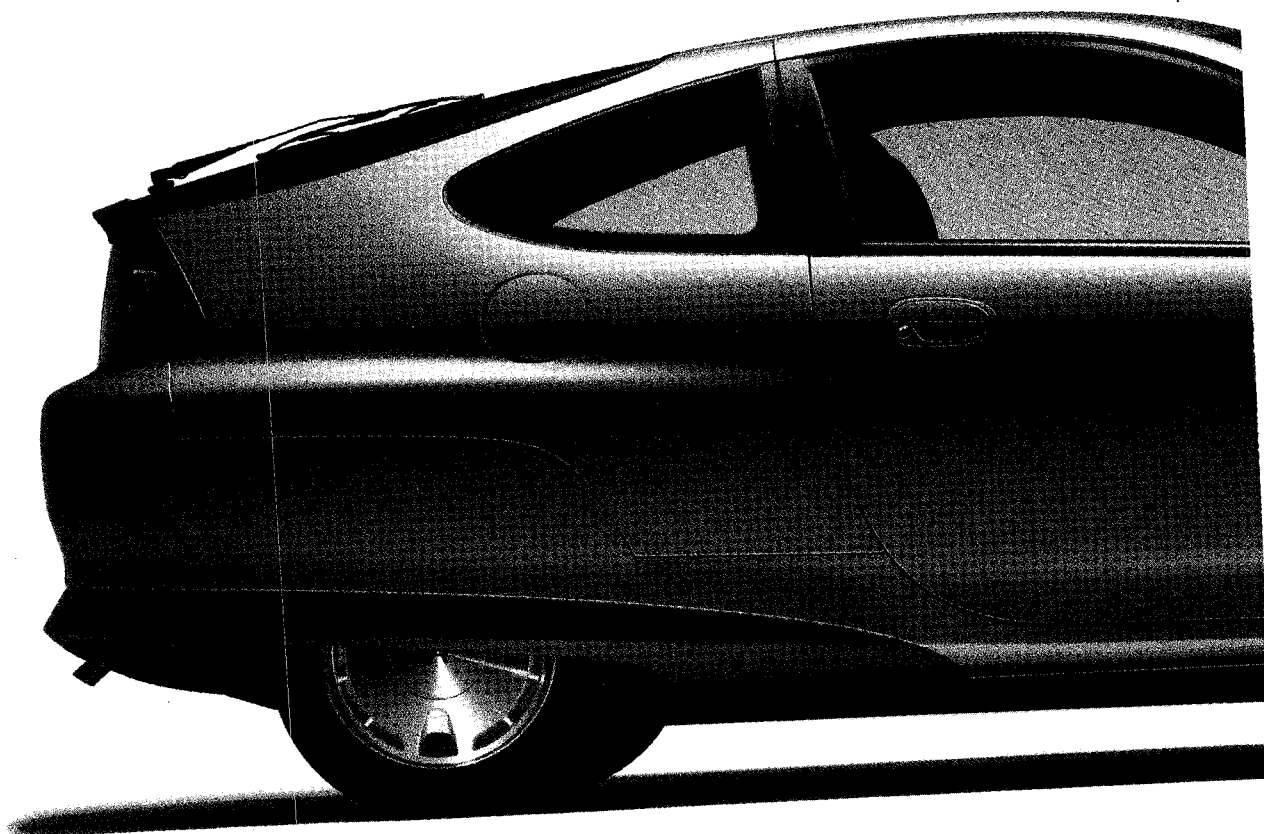
How Clinton kept us from getting his goat

BY ROY BLOUNT JR.

Strange to have had a President who cites as one of his signal achievements his acquittal. But maybe Bill Clinton was sent from heaven to preserve us from those who would present themselves as unimpeachable.

He hath lied to the American people! Remember that? Well, I guess they didn’t actually say *hath*. But that’s what they meant. Every time I heard this pronouncement, I tried to picture this American people. A soiled dove, righteous in her vengeance? A toddler staring open-mouthed at one of its parents as the other rages, “You do not love Baby!”?

The American people like being lied to. Hence Ronald Reagan. But even for a President who is not a professional actor, misrepresentation is part of the job. Commentators who do not bear this in mind are like critics in the audience shouting “Tell us what you *really* think” at an actor who is trying to bring off a drama.



*Mileage figures based on EPA estimates. Actual mileage may vary. Range based on EPA highway mileage. †California Air Resources Board ULEV-certified for California and some Northeastern states. LEV-certified in rest of country. ©2000 American Honda Motor Co., Inc. honda.com

It's an environmental movement all by itself.

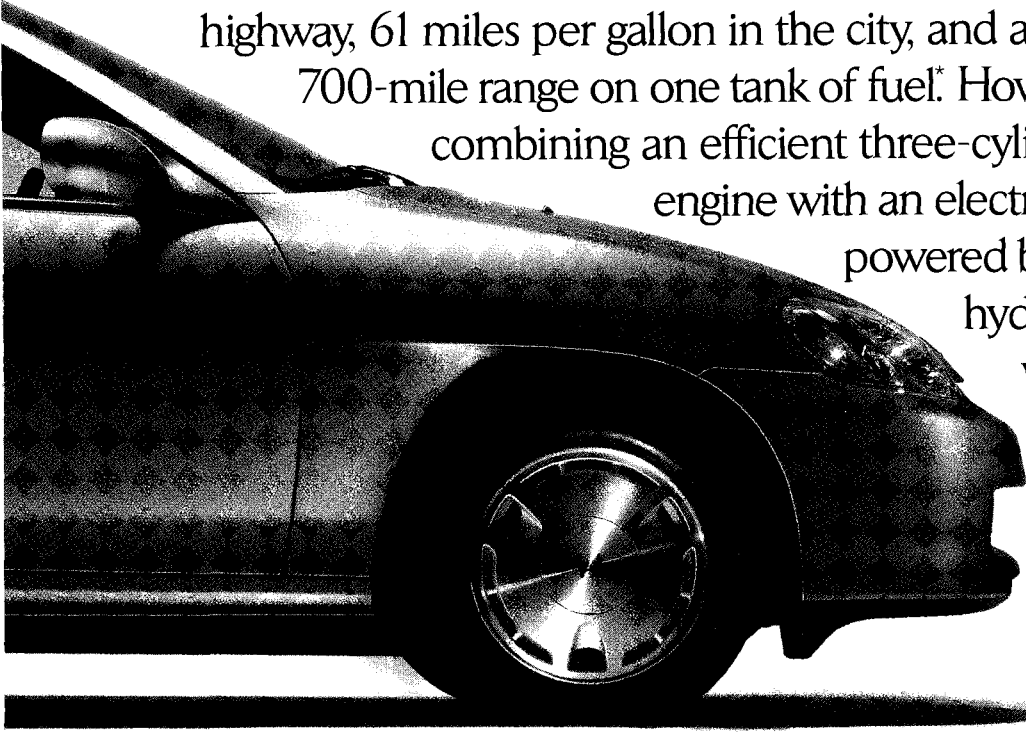
How many cars does it take to change the world? Just one, perhaps. Introducing the Honda Insight. It's America's first gasoline-electric hybrid automobile.

Nothing short of an engineering breakthrough, the new Insight achieves an astounding 68 miles per gallon on the highway, 61 miles per gallon in the city, and a phenomenal 700-mile range on one tank of fuel.* How? Simply by

combining an efficient three-cylinder gasoline engine with an electric motor that's powered by nickel-metal hydride batteries

which never need to be plugged in. Then add a lightweight body, and a world-class

aerodynamic design, and you have the ultra-low-emission† Insight. It's the result of years of research and development into lighter, more fuel-efficient, cleaner cars. In other words, technology with a conscience. Then again, what else would you expect from a car powered by Honda?



HONDA

Commentators—part of whose job, to be sure, is to point out lies—ought for the sake of intellectual honesty to bear in mind that it is easier to be right than to be President.

I'm right—although not everyone will agree, and not many people (I needn't go so far as to concede that I care how many) will care. I am *trying* to be right, secure in the knowledge that if I am, or if I'm not, people will little note nor long remember. When a President says something, it is a form of high-stakes marketing. The President is betting that a majority, or at least a plurality (or, for the moment, certain target groups), will agree, and he wants everyone (though he hopes certain nontarget groups aren't paying close attention) to care. Not only is a President's life not his own, but neither is his integrity. That is to say, he is less like the straw men of punditry than like people in business or other areas of real life: richly imbued with conscious and unconscious ulteriority. To wax indignant about a President's telling lies makes no more sense than to do so about a wrestler's faking falls. Well, that analogy may be too pejorative. (It is undoubtedly irrelevant to note that many years ago, when wrestling was in earnest, there was a great wrestler named Cotch, perhaps the patron saint of gotcha journalism.) Let's say that it makes no more sense than to wax indignant about "trick photography" in the movies. Well, that analogy may not be pejorative enough. At any rate, the media tend to judge politicians, favorably or unfavorably, by a platonic ideal that is easier to apply than to justify. If we thought of a President less as a role model than as a character in fiction, we would see him more clearly. Bill Clinton may not have had a great character, but he has been one.

Voters—part of whose job, to be sure, is to hold certain truths self-evident—ought to bear in mind, for the sake of civic responsibility, that politics is relative. As Henny Youngman would say when asked "How's your wife?": "Compared to what?"

Presented with two ruthless, pandering men who believe expressly in God and necessarily in Mammon, each of whom must be overcompensating drastically for something in his childhood, we ought to vote for whichever one strikes us as marginally more likely, by dint of personal verve or party affiliation, to slow down or speed up the nation's drift toward wherever we fear or hope it is heading. We should of course harbor the expectation that he will surprise us (by *us* here is meant the decent minority within his plurality) by doing something courageous—that is to say, something decent but unpopular, it being *his* problem that most of us (by *us* here is meant the body politic as a whole) are more likely to vote against him next time because he did it. We must resist the temptation to dismiss all candidates for President as beneath us. Otherwise we'll never forgive ourselves for voting for any of them. We must compare them not with ourselves but with each other. One of them is always less deeply beneath us. If there is a third-

party candidate for whom we would rather vote, we should vote for our second choice. Third-party candidates have the luxury of being relatively unpopular. If you are going to vote for one of them because he or she is *right*, you might as well vote for yourself.

We can't help realizing during campaigns that politicians are relative to each other. After the election, however, we begin to consider the winner as someone who is—or who, we want to make absolutely clear, is not—an extension of our ideal selves. It astonished me to hear men of the world rigidly denounce Bill Clinton for yielding to temptations of the flesh (not that I condone it myself), and women of the world just as rigidly denounce Hillary Clinton for remaining married to him (not that I would have held it against her if she'd dumped the son of a bitch—except wouldn't it have been awfully quixotic of her to divorce a man who didn't even own a house?), until I realized that these were husbands trying to make it clear to their wives (and congressmen to their idealized constituents) that *they* wouldn't mess around with an intern, and wives trying to make it clear to their husbands that *they* wouldn't tolerate it.

The only way a President can survive and stay focused long enough to get anything done is to be robustly relativist himself. Relativism is his Teflon. (Those swing voters who preferred George W. Bush over Al Gore did so, I would say, because they made out Bush's back to be more like a duck's.) Reagan and Clinton, each in his different way, managed to keep us from getting their goat. When asked, say, whether he ever wanted to go into outer space, Reagan would answer, "Some people think I've been out there for years." Clinton would emerge from his first meeting with Ken Starr at the White House to tell staffers that he rather liked Starr, and wanted to invite him sometime to see the Lincoln Bedroom. Each man, we might say, managed to pull off a cable presidency in a major-network market; but Reagan's was Pat Robertson's Christian network, Clinton's was HBO. I'll take Clinton's.

Part of a President's job, to be sure, is to amount to more than just Teflon. But did you see the pictures of Clinton in Hanoi, dwarfed physically but by no means psychologically by a monumental bust of Ho Chi Minh? There he stood, who in his youth wiggled out of a military obligation, smiling like the very essence of handsome Americanism and paying honor to the soldiers on both sides of "the conflict we call the Vietnam War and you call the American War." Call it effrontery—but what if Lyndon Johnson had had something approaching that sense of perspective?

At a dinner party back during the campaign of 1992 I was speaking up for Bill Clinton on a *faute de mieux* basis when someone at the table exclaimed, "Don't you want a President who *believes in something*?" What I said was "No." If I'd been as quick-witted as we expect a President to be, I'd have said what occurred to me later: "No, I want a President who caters, effectively and constructively, to the right

people." I believe that Bill Clinton came relatively close, under the circumstances, to doing that. I also want a President—and here I may approach absolutism—who outslicks the absolutist right. So I tend to agree with Bill Clinton that one of his signal achievements was his acquittal.

Roy Blount Jr. is a contributing editor of The Atlantic. He is at work on a biography of Robert E. Lee.



THE PROMISE KEEPER

*At least when it came to campaign pledges,
Bill Clinton told the truth*

BY CARL M. CANNON

After winning re-election in 1996, President Clinton held a press conference in the East Room. I asked him about a specific campaign promise he had made at the Chicago convention: to virtually eliminate one of America's most hated taxes, the capital-gains tax that people paid when they sold their homes. Did you mean it? I asked Clinton. Will it be in the budget you submit to Congress?

"The answer is yes, my homeowners' exemption, capital-gains exemption, is in the budget," the President replied. He added, "Everything I talked about at Chicago is in the budget."

And so it was. The capital-gains provision went into the budget, stayed there, and became law. And this is emblematic of the most underappreciated legacies of Clinton's presidency: his consistent efforts to follow through—and deliver—on his very many, and quite specific, campaign promises.

In 1992 Clinton vowed to cut the projected annual federal deficit in half during his first term, raise taxes on the wealthiest Americans, increase assistance to the working poor under the Earned Income Tax Credit, increase federal spending for worker retraining, greatly expand Head Start, support the North American Free Trade Agreement, beef up the Pell Grant program (which provides assistance to disadvantaged college students), and give all Americans access to "quality, affordable" health care. These things taken together, he promised, would jump-start the economy, which would respond by creating eight million new jobs. The attempt at health-care reform foundered, but in all other respects Clinton did everything he said he would, and the economy created nearly 11 million new jobs in his first term alone.

Clinton also promised in 1992 to push for a five-day waiting period for handgun purchases, quash regulations that would sharply restrict abortion counseling at health clinics receiving federal funds, use federal money to put 100,000 new police officers on the nation's streets, establish a new youth service corps, personally forge a compromise on logging in the Northwest, sign the Violence Against

Women Act, push for campaign-finance reform, and "end welfare as we know it."

Clinton fought for all these things except campaign-finance reform, which he dropped when congressional Democrats balked. The rest are now law. Whatever one thinks of Clinton, or of these policies, it must be pointed out that the Democrats' campaign slogan of 1996, "Promises made, promises kept," has a retrospective ring of truth to it. Sure, one can quibble here and there: The 100,000 cops actually amounted to something closer to 60,000. He vetoed welfare reform twice before signing it, under protest. But many other results exceeded Clinton's promises: The budget deficit wasn't just cut in half; the budget is now in surplus. And whether it was 60,000 cops or 100,000 cops, violent crime decreased markedly year after year on Clinton's watch.

This habit of delivering on his promises continued after the 1996 election. Besides granting capital-gains relief, Clinton vowed that year to set aside vast tracts of pristine land for environmental protection, to increase spending on teaching kids to read by the third grade, to offer working-class American families \$1,500 tax credits for college, and to expand Medicare coverage. He delivered on those promises, too, and most likely would have accomplished much more in his second term if not for the chaos of impeachment.

One irony of that fight is that Clinton and his supporters were able to fashion a defense on the ground that whatever the failings of his personal life, Clinton had kept his word to the American people on the issues that mattered to them. It wouldn't have worked if it hadn't been true.

Carl M. Cannon, a correspondent for National Journal, has covered the White House throughout the Clinton Administration.



MUTUAL ASSURED DESTRUCTION

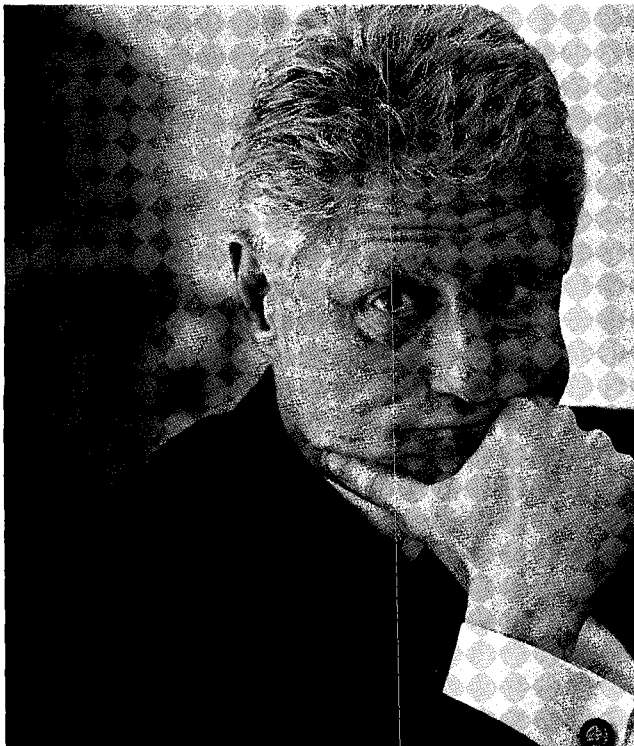
*He made sex obsolete—
at least as a weapon of political war*

BY WILFRID SHEED

Is it possible that Kenneth Starr was really a double agent, working for the *other* conspiracy? Think about it. Before Judge Starr got into gear, Newt Gingrich was still riding tolerably high as Republican speaker of the House, with a bevy of good old boys jostling for position behind him in case he should stumble. But then, just like that, Newt was gone, and so was the next man in line, and suddenly you couldn't give this plum away. The Republican Party had been definitively exposed as the Party of Adultery, and would in the last result have to reach all the way out of the Bible Belt and into the sinful North to find a pure Republican.

A real double agent could hardly have done more, or done it more entertainingly. There is nothing in nature funnier, or better for the nation, than the sight of a pharisee running down the street with his pants around his knees. And one assumed that when the laughter had subsided, everybody would have learned his lesson and would return gratefully to the ancient doctrine of MAD, or "mutual assured destruction," which says, "I won't use the sex bomb if you won't." Done and done, over and out.

But the cheese was still sitting there in the trap, and the bait was on the line, and the conservatives simply had to keep going—though more carefully this time. In fact, a kid



listening to the second wave of right-wing telethoners might have gotten the fuzzy notion that sex outside marriage actually wasn't all that bad, and that maybe lying to your wife about it was at least understandable. But using legalisms in a court of law? Would the man stop at nothing?

So the wily Starr kept on reeling until the conservatives were all the way into court themselves—a joke of their own devising. Along the road to impeachment Starr had somehow even persuaded them to acquiesce in another conservative first—pornography on the Internet, in the form of the salacious Starr Report on Clinton's doings, a sin the religious right is still paying for in lost power and credibility.

And the basic weakness in elementary fairness of the conservatives' case remained: namely, that since no other major politician had ever before been trapped into testifying about his sex life in court, there was no standard to judge Clinton by, no precedent. Was he really the only one who would have lied about this? And if Ronald Reagan could honorably lie about Irangate in the national interest, why shouldn't Clinton lie about a matter of no national consequence in his *family's* interest?

At this point, it seems, the Republicans were hoping the man would simply resign out of shame. *They* would have. But Republicans have a certain unstated advantage in this respect. Much like Muslims who aren't afraid of dying in battle, they know they will go straight to heaven if they resign from office—heaven being a chance to make some real money. And since for this kind of conservative, politics is a lot more like jury duty than a serious calling, a grand passion for it like Bill Clinton's must seem almost satanic. But time hangs heavy in Washington if you don't believe in government to begin with, and the devil notoriously finds work for idle hands—most temptingly in the form of investigations, which look just like work and also serve to take the public's mind off politics for precious months and years on end. In the 1950s there were, as I recall, at least two or three committees engaged in the rooting out of old Communists in addition to Joe McCarthy's sub-one. This time around every hand seems to have downed a tool in order to catch the President in the act of fanny-pinching, or whatever. (I myself am a bit of a prude about other people's private lives.)

Anyhow, the Starr revolution has brought a sharp halt to this particular line of make-work, if only because the scabrous Larry Flynt does it so much better—and was in fact threatening to turn the Grand Old Party into a grand old shambles, complete, no doubt, with pictures and affidavits. Now it's down with the politics of personal destruction, which no one else had been practicing anyway, and back to kicking in the shins and biting in the clinches—in short, the normal give and take of politics.

One obvious legacy of the Clinton years is that with hypocrisy temporarily routed, the basics have become much clearer. Republicans are adventurers, Democrats are



SNEAK PREVIEW by Pat Oliphant

worrywarts, and neither group is particularly Christian. Play ball! Most of Clinton's other legacies will naturally depend on how his various horses run, from NAFTA to Beijing to health care. But two things stick out so far from the normal that they will probably be remembered no matter what happens. One of them is the sheer insensate virulence of his critics. If size can be measured by the lip-frothing frustration of one's enemies, Clinton is right up there with Moby-Dick. The other is the five-minute standing ovation Clinton received at the UN at the height of the Monica madness. The applause couldn't *all* have been for adultery—not even the applause from the French ambassador.

And even if, as his critics maintain, it was all a trick both at home and abroad, the trick had worked wonderfully well. But he couldn't have gotten all five minutes without Kenneth Starr.

Wilfrid Sheed is working on a book about the great American songwriters circa 1920–1950.



A GENERATION WITHOUT PUBLIC PASSION

*Clinton's chief legacy to the young was
to drain politics of idealism*

BY ARLIE RUSSELL HOCHSCHILD

Has Bill Clinton inspired idealism in the young, as he himself was inspired by John F. Kennedy? Or has he actually reduced their idealism? Surely part of the answer lies in Clinton's personal moral lapse with Monica Lewinsky. But more important was his sin of omission—his failure to embrace a moral cause beyond popularity. The main story was not too much private passion but insufficient public passion.

Even if Clinton had offered a better human example and a more compelling political agenda, young people might have remained civically inert, because larger social forces have atomized their political will. The Clinton years have sharpened a great paradox: The surface of American life looks smooth, prosperous, peaceful. But underneath, fault-line shifts in family and work life have led us into what some have called "advanced insecurity." Replacing an old society based on marriage and employment, the philosopher Jerald Wallulis argues, is a new society based on marriageability and employability. Many of the young aspire to happy marriages and dot-com fortunes but end up in guarded love and okay-for-now jobs.

That young people's commitment to improving society has faded may turn out to be the most significant fact about the Clinton years. In his *The Cycles of American History*

(1986) Arthur Schlesinger Jr. wrote that the alternation between periods of reform and periods of conservatism in American history has a generational pattern: "In basic respects it is the generational experience that serves as the mainspring of the political cycle ... Each new generation, when it attains power, tends to repudiate the work of the generation it has displaced and to reenact the ideals of its own formative days thirty years before." Schlesinger had in mind the children of the 1930s who embraced the liberalism of the 1960s, among other examples. But the cycle of reform and activism was frustrated by the politics of the 1990s. Bill Clinton and Al Gore are sixties men, and could have inspired the young to draw on a sixties tradition of progressive activism. Clinton did establish AmeriCorps, a Peace Corps for the nineties, and he did pass the Family and Medical Leave Act, and he did try for universal health care. But it was hard for the young to get excited about welfare reform that took money from poor mothers, or about the Freedom to Farm Act, which withdrew support for small and medium family farms, or about increases in the military budget when the Cold War was over. All else was gridlock, compromise, spin, and cynicism. Will that be Clinton's legacy—that he drained politics of idealism and discouraged generational renewal? The combination of Clinton's stay-in-power agenda and our privatizing times has frustrated what Schlesinger saw as the "systole" and "diastole" of politics. And current evidence on civic disengagement should give one pause as to how that cycle will play out in the future.

In *Bowling Alone* (2000) the Harvard political scientist Robert Putnam reported a decline in trust among people in their twenties and a rise in malaise and unhappiness. In fact, Putnam noted, "surveys in the 1940s and 1950s had found that younger people were *happier* than older people ... By 1999, however, younger people were *unhappier* than older people." In *The Ambitious Generation* (1999) the sociologists Barbara Schneider and David Stevenson showed that American teenagers are now spending more time alone (three and a half hours a day) than teenagers used to, and spending more time alone than they spend with family and friends. All this has set the stage for a decline in civic engagement among the young. Putnam noted that 49 percent of eighteen- to twenty-nine-year-olds in 1972–1975 said they read the newspaper daily; in the Clinton years 21 percent of that age group did so. Forty-two percent of young people reported signing a petition in 1972–1975; 23 percent did so in the 1990s. Fifteen percent of young people in the 1970s reported joining a union; five percent so reported in the 1990s. Nineteen percent of young people in the 1970s reported attending a public meeting; eight percent did so in the 1990s. Thirteen percent of seventies young people but only seven percent of nineties young people reported writing a congressman. Thirteen percent of seventies young people but only six percent of nineties young people reported serving as an officer or a committee member of a



local organization. According to a survey of freshmen at the University of California at Los Angeles, even participation in student elections declined, from 75 percent for high school students in the late 1960s to 20 percent in the late 1990s. An early-1970s survey of UCLA freshmen revealed that about 45 percent of the young considered cleaning up the environment to be an important personal goal. Today only 19 percent feel that way. It would seem that as global warming has grown worse, the response to it among the young has grown weaker.

In truth, the twentysomethings of today, whether bowling alone or not, are part of a cohort, not a generation. As the German sociologist Karl Mannheim pointed out in a classic 1928 essay, "The Problem of Generations," a generation consists of people of the same age confronted with some powerful historic event. Not all members of a generation see the event in the same way, Mannheim wrote, but what makes a cohort into a generation is its connection to that event—in the twentieth century it might be the Depression, World War II, civil rights, Vietnam, the Cold War. For today's cohort, the slow, deadly advance of global warming is such an event. But the vision to stop it, and the model of a government devoted to high public purpose, have been largely absent. Spared by history, and—to quote Senator John McCain—with no cause to believe in "bigger than themselves," today's young have faced only personal events—a lost job here, a divorce there. Many members of Gen X and Gen Y, as we call them, seem to be trying to sort

out a version of the insecurity paradox. On the one hand, they feel luckier than previous generations, because they enjoy a bigger cultural menu from which to choose a lifestyle, an identity, an authentic self. In the 1950s most women could hold their heads high only as married homemakers and mothers of two. In the 1990s a woman could be a doctor, a professor, a pilot, a single mom, a lesbian, a surrogate mom. On the other hand, this new freedom comes with a new sense of insecurity—especially with regard to the two main anchors of identity: marriage and work. You can marry, but will you stay married? You can work at a job, but will you be able to stay in that job? If in previous decades large historic events drew people together and oriented them toward collective action, the recent double trend toward greater choice but less security leads the young to see their lives in more-individual terms. Big events collectivize. Little events atomize.

Putnam pointed out the link between social engagement and national emergencies. Civic engagement increases before, during, and after wars. The challenge of the post-Clinton years, then, may be twofold. The first will be to reduce the conditions of advanced insecurity—by aiding the labor movement's attempt to reverse the trend toward contingent workers (to take one example of the politics of economic security in an era of globalization) and by implementing family-friendly policies at work. The second will be to mobilize ourselves for war—not a war of one nation against another but a war of the foresighted against the smokestacks, tailpipes, and fossil-fuel-heavy lifestyle "choices" that nature can no longer bear. The Cold War is over. But the potentially more deadly Warm War is not. The United States makes up five percent of the world's population but consumes 30 percent of the world's resources and generates 25 percent of the world's pollution. So for Americans this is no easy war. The commercial culture in which we all live is on the other side. In his otherwise discouraging picture of the disengaged young, Putnam noted in passing one hopeful finding—an increase in volunteerism among high school students over the past ten years. Does this merely reflect students' efforts to look good for colleges that are increasingly hard to get into?

Or is it a sign that despite missing leadership from the top, the young are beginning to engage the pressing issues of the day, presaging more activism such as that in Seattle and The Hague, where demonstrators recently built a sand dike in front of a conference hall housing negotiators on global warming to show how high the water will come when the world warms. Time will tell. The young have much to overcome, and they will have to bring their elders along. But the stakes are high. There's open water at the North Pole.

Arlie Russell Hochschild is a professor of sociology at the University of California at Berkeley and the author of The Time Bind: When Work Becomes Home and Home Becomes Work (1997).

FLOTUS BLOSSOMS

From a political appendage to a free-standing figure—who is, oddly enough, not really there

BY TISH DURKIN

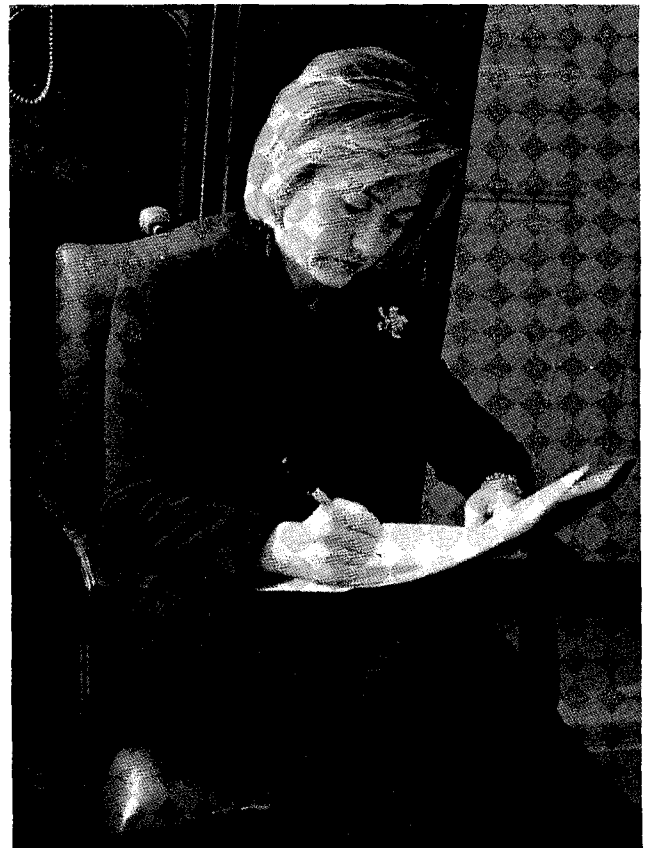
If you want to know all there is to know about politics in the time of Clinton, look in your grocer's dairy section. Back in the early days of her New York congressional campaign the future Senator Clinton and the rest of Team Hillary made a crack-of-dawn raid on a supermarket in Rochester, complete with Secret Service, traveling press, local press, an army of Democratic regulars, and a handful of innocents who, God help them, just wanted a gallon of milk. After the greeting portion of the First Lady's visit but before the local-television-interviews portion came the faux-shopping portion, during which Clinton walked up to a huge counter, gazed into a world of Couda, Swiss, and Cheddar under glass, and exclaimed with no small enthusiasm, "I'm a cheese person!"

It seems odd that this, of all moments to remember in the First Lady's historically unprecedented yet insistently uninteresting run for office, would be among those still blinking neon in the brain so long after the fact—but it isn't, really. Her pronouncement of self-identity as cheese was perfectly emblematic of the First Lady's approach to politics—and not just because it was one of her frequent, almost poignantly stilted attempts to make some kind of ordinary human connection without actually making any kind of ordinary human connection.

The Cheese Declaration revealed an infinitesimal but actual scrap of definitive personal detail—a yellow-diamond rarity. (Memo to self: FLOTUS is unequivocally pro-cheese. Position on crackers unclear.) But in terms of larger themes, the setting is what makes the scene stick. For wandering through the campaign of Hillary Clinton—and through the time of Bill Clinton—resembles nothing more than wandering through an intimidatingly huge, bright, overstocked American supermarket, the kind that gives Third World immigrants palpitations from the varieties of mayonnaise alone. In World o' Clinton as in Food King there is, of course, much that is undeniably good: Choice! Abundance! Comfort! And yet in both places there is a sense that something is not entirely as it seems; that all those labels and colors and bargains cannot be quite real; that one's whites aren't really getting so much whiter, or one's brights so much brighter, as everyone seems to be insisting. What are pressingly referred to as "the issues" not only are test-marketed but also come in convenient, individually wrapped form, like Kraft Singles. Or, perhaps, one might think of them as "issue-ettes": they are to real issues as towelettes are to real wash towels—better than nothing, no doubt, but only barely related to the thing that is truly wanted.

Hillary Clinton has been portrayed by friend and foe alike as all manner of things bold and incendiary—a lightning rod, a firecracker, a trailblazer. As a senatorial candidate, though, she was always a cheese person—or perhaps, to be more precise, a nondairy-processed-cheese-like-product person. She showed up in a lot of places, dressed inoffensively, and spoke in perfect paragraphs. The tone—and, for that matter, the content—of what she had to say would not have seemed out of place coming from Annette Funicello or Florence Henderson in their food-hawking heyday. "Choosy moms choose Hillary!" was not an actual campaign slogan, but only, one presumes, because the Jif people would have gone ballistic.

People who shop are people who vote, and politics has reacted accordingly. No wonder the whole discourse has been shrink-wrapped, rendered fun-size. People have made their fortunes in achieving this. Clintonism and the Republican reaction to Clintonism have given us the Ritz Bitsing of American politics. The debate over "a woman's right to choose" has come to center on a choice about late-term abortion that almost no women will ever have to make. The Social Security debate has been glued to the question of whether all currently elderly people should fear cuts that no currently elderly people will face. The health-care debate has de-escalated—with no corresponding climb down the rungs of rhetoric—from a debate about whether all Americans should get health insurance to one about whether Americans who already have health insurance



should be able to sue the source of it. (The much-touted Patients' Bill of Rights may be good or it may be bad, but when it comes to the root problem of de-linking how a person is covered from whether and where a person is employed, it is totally irrelevant.) School shootings, semi-literate graduates, and imploding family structures are answered with calls for the V-chip, the school uniform, the Ten Commandments on the classroom wall. Cheese.

None of this is to say that no questions of enormous importance have been decided in the Clinton years. But the ones that have, paradoxically, have been decided after virtually no debate at all, and, quite often, more or less by accident. In 1996, for instance, the federal safety net for the poor was removed with hardly a peep out of anyone. More recently some of the most reliably pro-labor members of Congress bucked the unions to join Republicans in permanently normalizing trade with China. The much-lamented breakdown in partisan cooperation has occurred in a larger atmosphere of partisan co-optation.

This trend would be fine, even wonderful, if it were occurring as an expression of great public consensus on matters of great public concern. In a stable democracy the centripetal forces should be tremendous. Compromise should be the language of the angels. Evolution should beat revolution every time. Things *can* taste good and be good for you too! But the trend is in fact occurring as an expression of serious public and political confusion, in an atmosphere of partisan hostility. And the partisan hostility, in turn, would be fine (welcome, actually) if it were not of such a high-calorie, low-content variety—if the level of sound and fury did not, in so very many instances, rise in direct proportion to how near to nothing the outcome signified.

I, for one, do not blame the Clintons for pulling American politics into the gutter (it's been there before—if, indeed, it has ever been out). But I will never forgive them for turning American politics into a Costco. Politics should have clear, or at least visible, edges, where the views of Candidate A end and those of Candidate B begin. Instead, in the world that the Clintons certainly found but then proceeded to perfect, Candidates A and B take the big questions, saw off the more dangerous edges so as not to cut themselves, and then whack each other in the head with big, steady planks on which every normal person would have to agree (Prosperity with a purpose! Working families! Save social security! Whose rally is this, anyway?). This is no way to have a lively conversation about anything, let alone a fight about the future of the country. And look what the willful killing of clarity hath wrought: Al Gore and George W. Bush not only purported to have but actually do have glaring differences on matters of major import. But for an entire campaign they chose to drown those differences in such a pool of platitudes that they *tied*. Ralph Nader didn't make them do it.

Poised by reputed intellect, temperament, and aspira-

tion to be the ultimate exception to the politics of de-clarification, Hillary Clinton has proved to be its Exhibit A. As befits a politics in which the purpose of language is to obscure rather than elucidate, the journey she actually made is the exact opposite of the journey she was commonly described as making. What happened as the First Lady made the transition from political appendage to (theoretically) free-standing political figure was shocking, albeit (again, confusingly) boring. As she came to the fore, she faded. Her rhetoric became weaker, not stronger. Her persona became less vivid and compelling, rather than more so. Whatever one thought of the First Lady's 1992 cookie-baking comment, her 1993 health-care testimonials before Congress, her 1995 telling-off of the Chinese government at the UN World Conference on Women, in Beijing, at least one had no doubt that somebody was *in there*. Now the question is whether she will resurface. My bet is nope.

Tish Durkin covered Hillary Clinton's senatorial campaign for The New York Observer.



CLINTON AND THE DEMOCRATS

The President's party has lost its power base, both in Washington and in the states

BY WILLIAM SCHNEIDER

When Bill Clinton made his triumphant, gladiator-style entrance at the Democratic National Convention last August, he was hailed by his party as a conquering hero. His accomplishments scrolled across the nation's television screens: "*longest economic expansion in American history ... lowest crime rate in 25 years ... 22 million new jobs ... paid off \$360 billion of the national debt.*"

Certain other statistics, however, were not mentioned. These pertain to how the Democratic Party fared during the Clinton years. Under Clinton the Democrats did not thrive. Their party lost its power base, not just in Washington, D.C., but also in the states. In a variety of ways Clinton left the Democrats in the worst shape they have been in in more than fifty years.

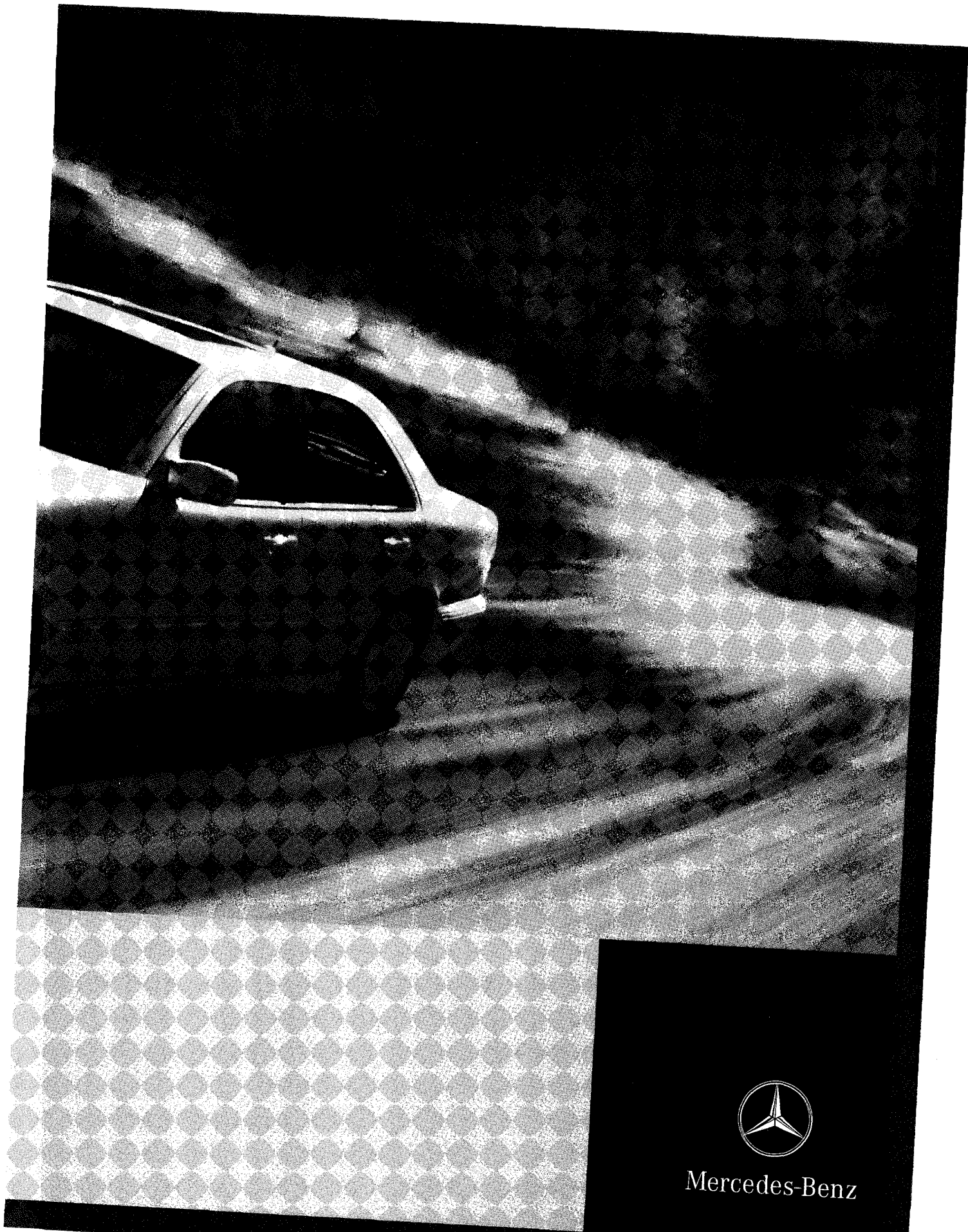
Here are some banners we didn't see as Clinton entered the Staples Center, in Los Angeles, last August 14.

Democrats lose majority in U.S. House of Representatives for the first time in 40 years. That was the great shock of 1994. But unlike what happened after 1946 and 1952—the last times the Democrats lost the House—the Republican Party did not lose its majority in the next election. Rather, it held on to that majority for three subsequent elections, although its margin has steadily diminished. The Republicans have

The E 320.
Where the rational mind
and the emotional mind collide.
Safely, of course.



When it comes to buying a car, it's easy to be of two minds. The rational mind desires things like safety and value. The emotional mind is swayed by performance and style. Fortunately, there is the E 320. It's a role model for luxury cars, precisely because it embodies all those attributes. So you should have no difficulty making up both your minds. To learn more, call 1-800-FOR-MERCEDES or visit www.MBUSA.com. The E-Class



Mercedes-Benz

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

©2000 Mercedes-Benz USA, LLC. A DaimlerChrysler Company

not held the House for such a long time since the 1920s.

It's hard to overstate the impact on the Democrats of losing control of the House. Through all the bad times—the Nixon years, the Reagan years—the House had remained the foundation of the Democratic empire. Then, suddenly, in 1994 it was gone. The Democrats took some comfort from their party's 1998 midterm gains and the subsequent fall of Newt Gingrich. But the barbarians retained control of the temple. For the Democrats to win back the House had to have been one of Clinton's highest priorities in last year's election. But the Republicans held on.

Democrats reach 50-year low in the U.S. Senate. From 1997 to 2000 the Democrats held forty-five Senate seats. Not since 1948 have they been so weak in the Senate. When Clinton was first elected, his party had a solid majority of fifty-seven Senate seats. In the 1994 catastrophe the number dropped to forty-seven. Last year's election brought the party back to parity with the Republicans. But Senate majorities in the range of fifty-four to sixty-eight seats, such as the Democrats enjoyed in the 1960s and 1970s, now seem beyond reach.

The country is likely to see excruciatingly narrow majorities in the House and the Senate over the next ten years, with nominal control shifting back and forth. The days of seemingly permanent Democratic sovereignty over Congress ended with the Clinton presidency.

Number of Democratic governors drops below 20 for the first time since 1970. The 1994 election was just as big a disaster for Democrats at the state level as at the federal level. In 1993 Democratic governors outnumbered Republicans by thirty to eighteen, with two independents. After the 1994 election the numbers flipped: thirty Republicans and nineteen Democrats. The 2001 lineup is virtually the same: twenty-nine Republicans and nineteen Democrats. Eight of the ten largest states now have Republican governors—all but California and Georgia.

Democrats control the smallest number of state legislatures in nearly 50 years. Only seventeen states now have Democrat-controlled legislatures. We have to go back to 1952 to find Democratic power at a lower ebb in state government. Just ten years ago Democratic legislatures outnumbered Republican legislatures by thirty to six, with divided control in thirteen. In 2001 the lineup is seventeen Democratic to sixteen Republican, with divided control in another sixteen states.

The Democrats' current weakness at the state level is especially damaging to them because state legislatures will dominate next year's redistricting. They will draw the lines to ensure an advantage for one party or the other in the U.S. House of Representatives and in the state legislatures. Any Democratic weakness now is likely to be locked in for the next decade.

The Clinton years have, in effect, equalized the strength of the two parties—a fact made painfully clear by the 2000 presidential vote. Under Clinton the Republicans made

gains unmatched even during the Reagan era—and they held on to them.

The disintegration of the nation's Democratic majority began during the Nixon era. Clinton presided over that majority's demise. Where does this leave the nation? Closely divided in presidential politics, in congressional politics, and in state politics, with sharper regional divisions and bitter partisan warfare. Not a lovely legacy.

William Schneider, a contributing editor of The Atlantic, is the senior political analyst for CNN.



THE WAY IT WASN'T

*An alternative history
of the Clinton Administration*

BY JACK BEATTY

I ndulge me in this alternative history of the Clinton Administration.

The day after his Inauguration, in January of 1993, President Bill Clinton invited the Democratic leaders of the House and the Senate to the White House for a meeting among whose consequences, historians would later reflect, was the emergence of a new Democratic majority to rival the New Deal coalition put together by Franklin Delano Roosevelt in the 1930s. The cement of the Clinton coalition, like that of its New Deal predecessor, was the idea of security—this time against ill health, untended illness, and medical indigence. Providing health-care security was not a species of social work: economists would judge it to have enhanced career choices and flexibility, because workers could risk leaving unchallenging jobs for invigorating ones or for retraining or for entrepreneurial ventures without fear of losing their health-care coverage. Longevity increased and public health generally improved as millions of the uninsured turned from traumatic to preventive care, more cost-effective by far. Efficiency marched with fairness.

"Folks," Clinton began at that White House meeting, "we control the House, the Senate, and the presidency. We've got to deliver. What and to whom is the question. The November election results gave us the answer. Let's call it the belt-and-suspenders strategy.

"Ross Perot won nineteen percent of the presidential vote, in the largest third-party turnout since 1924. Consider the Perot voters the belt. The results also showed that nearly 85 million eligible voters stayed home. They are the suspenders. *Who needs them?* you're thinking. *We won without them.* Well, I did not reach a majority without them. I got a lower percentage of the popular vote in winning than Mike Dukakis did in losing, and no Democrat has won more than

a swing vote or two north of fifty percent since LBJ in 1964. Sure, Perot winnowed my numbers, but what do we say about the Democratic candidates—Humphrey, McGovern, Carter, Mondale, Dukakis—of the sixties, seventies, and eighties? The Republicans through these years usually won with more than fifty percent, sometimes in landslides.

“So what’s wrong with us? This: The electorate as it is tilts Republican. Two thirds of those with household incomes above fifty thousand dollars vote; two thirds of those with household incomes of fifteen thousand or below abstain. To become a majority party again, to re-elect me in 1996, to elect Al Gore in 2000, to keep the House and the Senate, we’ve got to expand the electorate. It will take something big—this generation’s equivalent of Social Security—to bind the voters to us. Policy must serve this politics. Perot campaigned on two issues: the deficit and campaign-finance reform. We could try to woo his voters with deficit reduction, but we’d do it at the expense of the suspenders—because securing the suspenders will take money. So campaign-finance reform will be our strategy for the belt. This election cost millions; estimates are that the 2000 elections will cost three billion dollars. The people want reform. We will give it to them—fast, before K Street buys off the zeal.

“Reform delivers not only the belt but also the suspenders. We can’t make the policy changes needed to land them, or enough of them, when the Big Money is still paying for our campaigns. We’ve got a conflict between our funders and our natural base that is keeping us from forging a new majority. Reform now will make 1994 a clean (okay—cleaner) election. That means your members can cast tough votes in this Congress without worrying about being swept away by a retaliatory avalanche of soft money.

“Their toughest vote will be on universal health insurance, which I campaigned on, promising legislation within my first hundred days. We’ll put it in the budget bill, which needs only a majority to pass, making health care filibuster-proof in the Senate. Need I state the obvious? Very few of the suspenders have health insurance. Overnight we will eliminate their main worry in life: what happens if they or their kids get seriously ill. They will be grateful. And so will anyone who gets laid off or switches jobs—an elastic category in a dynamic economy, and a factor in its dynamism. Bill Kristol, Dan Quayle’s late brain, says ‘health care that’s always there’ will moor the middle class in the Democratic Party. ‘It will re-legitimize middle-class dependence for “security” on government spending and regulation. It will revive the reputation of the party that spends and regulates ... as the generous protector of middle-class interests. And it will at the same time strike a punishing blow against Republican claims to defend the middle class by restraining government.’ Ah, the clarity of the moment before the blade falls.

“We’ll turn the media into the press agents of universal care. Hillary will hold weeks of public meetings to plumb

the intricacies of health-care reform. Instead of reporting backstage leaks, the press will have its hands full explaining ‘managed care,’ ‘competition within a budget,’ and ‘community rating.’ When tradeoffs have to be made, the public will hear the arguments. Cokie Roberts will do her worst to take the mind out of this. Some subjects are necessarily so complex, however, as to repel vacuity. I can imagine members’ saying the belt is enough—going for the suspenders is too risky. Tell them you can’t build a new majority on dust. Perot voters, viscerally anti-political, are always liable to blow to a candidate who promises to end the ‘partisan bickering’ in Washington and ‘bring the parties together’—as if the parties did not properly represent ‘distinct interests in society,’ to quote Madison, who said ‘the regulation of these various and interfering interests forms the principal task of modern legislation,’ one involving ‘the spirit of party and faction in the necessary and ordinary operations of the government.’ Politics is the sun of government.

“All other issues are secondary to belts and suspenders. ‘We have five million to spend,’ Lane Kirkland told me at the Inauguration. ‘We can spend it either supporting health care or fighting NAFTA.’ That’s an easy call. Postpone a vote on NAFTA till next year, when the Republicans, hungry to deliver for their interests, will help me pass it. NAFTA will take some of the ideological sting out of health-care reform. The Republicans can’t paint me as anti-business if I do free trade. Labor wants health care instead of NAFTA, but the best we can do is health care before NAFTA. Am I saying take their money and run? Certainly not. They’ll get something for it. Universal health insurance is part of the social infrastructure of free trade. ‘You might lose your job to a Mexican peasant, but you will still have health insurance.’ That’s enough of an argument to keep labor on board. And besides, they have nowhere else to go. Ditto the liberals on welfare reform. Health care first—then I’ll use Republican votes to pass welfare reform, robbing them of that wedge issue forever. Remember what Lenin said about the capitalists furnishing the rope.

“What about the deficit? I’m spending no political capital on that. The economy is already recovering. We will grow our way out of the deficit. A high-tech boom is aborning. What’s that thing Al Gore invented? The Internet. It could be to our time what the railroad was to the late nineteenth century. The top five percent will make fortunes off Wall Street’s romance with this stuff, the superflux falling on the deficit. Taxes paid overwhelmingly by Republicans will turn the Democrats into the party of fiscal responsibility.

“Is this a great country, or what?”

Jack Beatty is a senior editor of The Atlantic.

ON THE WEB: See www.theatlantic.com/clinton for links to related articles from past issues of The Atlantic by Peter Edelman, Thomas Byrne Edsall, James Fallows, Steven Stark, and others, and also for an Atlantic Unbound Roundtable from January, 2000, featuring Jack Beatty, David Brooks, David Corn, and Sean Wilentz on the question “Does Clinton Matter?”

“You’re young. With lots of bills...
what a great time to start a
financial plan!”

Anthony Padilla
AXA Advisors



“Everyone says it’s never too late to start a financial plan. I say it’s never too early. I can help you think through priorities and come up with a plan to afford a home, college tuition...a better life.”
AXA Advisors is about a one-on-one relationship with a professional. A financial plan combined with an AXA Asset Account helps you gain understanding and control.
“Young people have this huge advantage...time.” Reach one of us at 1(888)AXA-INFO (292-4636) or visit www.axa-advisors.com.



AXA ADVISORS
Building Futures

THE BANDIT KING AND THE MOVIE STAR

On July 30 of last year a notorious Indian smuggler and poacher named Veerappan kidnapped an elderly and beloved Indian actor named Rajkumar and squirreled him away in a forest hideout. The ransom demands were political—and unacceptable. The kidnapping roiled India and churned an American-style media frenzy. Then, suddenly, in November, Rajkumar was set free, under circumstances fraught with mystery

BY ABRAHAM VERGHESE

.....

It was after midnight on August 6 when my plane landed in Madras, in southern India. On the cab ride into town the breeze coming through the window carried the scent of the ocean but also hints of coir rope, ganja, and jasmine. It was a complex fragrance, and it evoked an involuntary flood of memories, as if the olfactory cortex of my brain had roused the rest of the house. I saw clearly the faces of people I had not thought about in years.

One particular bend in the road, as we motored past St. Thomas Mount and the Officers Training College, brought to mind a one-eyed Anglo-Indian hooker named Blossom. It was my first time, and some upperclassmen at my college had taken me to a brothel. Blossom had been grinding chili in the kitchen when she was pressed into duty. I still remember the scent of chili wafting up from her hand as it lay motionless on the pillow. The rest of her was motionless too. "Hurry up, child, we don't have all night," she said.

I left Madras twenty years ago. Two marriages and three children later I am a different man from the one who left. My return visits have been sporadic. But there is great delight in a homecoming. Only one thing spoils it: the city's new name—Chennai—grates on my ears. A delayed post-colonial regionalism has brought many such changes; the state to which the city belongs is no longer Madras state but Tamil Nadu—land of the Tamils.

I played the game of the returning native—looking for familiar landmarks, seeing if I could recognize them behind the hoardings and billboards and new apartment buildings that have so altered the face of the city. My cabby was a dark, moustachioed Tamil who sat scrunched up against the door, his shoulder half out the window, addressing the steering wheel and pedals in a sideways fashion. His toes, curled around the accelerator, looked like carved ebony. I



asked him if there had been disturbances in Madras, as there had been recently in Bangalore, with the news that Veerappan had kidnapped Rajkumar. (I didn't have to say "Rajkumar, the actor" or "Veerappan, the smuggler"; the kidnapping had been front and center in India for days.)

The cabby laughed at my question. "Riots?" he said in Tamil. "What for? What do we care about Rajkumar? He is nothing to us in Madras." And then he added,

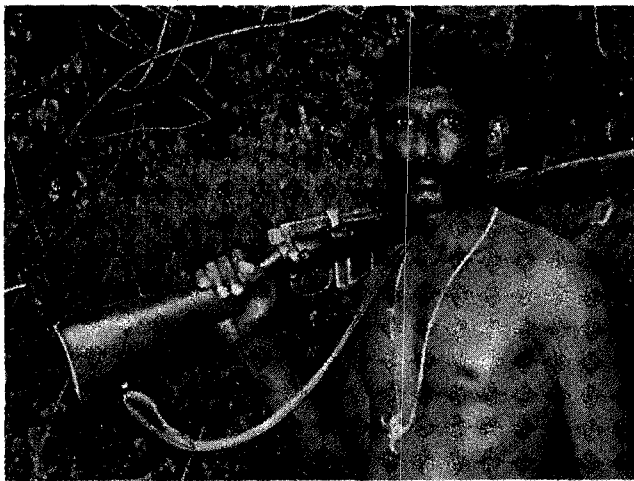
with a strange authority and confidence that I was to encounter repeatedly, and always from persons far removed from the story, "He will be released tomorrow. Definitely." He was satisfied with his pronouncement. He looked at me and gave me a don't-mention-it wag of his head.

When we pulled under the glittering portico of the Taj Coromandel Hotel, it was crowded with socialites departing from a gala. The bejeweled women rustled by in their chiffon saris, calling good-bye to each other in voices like myna birds. I smelled Shalimar, Chanel No. 5, Bijan. The men were stoic, more Old Spice than Drakkar Noir; they stood holding open the doors of the cars the valets had brought around. I was embarrassed by my rumpled clothing, the stubble on my face, and my *eau de travel*. But more than anything it was my bare upper lip that bothered me. All the years I lived in Madras I had worn a moustache. Now that I was back, I saw a moustache on every male face. Without one of my own I felt exposed.

Moustaches were on my mind because of Veerappan and his trademark facial growth. His moustache is called a *kattabomman*, which has historically represented passion and fierceness. Throughout India it is a staple of police inspectors, villains, ruffians, and zamindars (and, of course, actors playing inspectors, villains, ruffians, and zamindars in Indian movies). Not everyone can pull off a *kattabomman*.

(though, God knows, we all tried in college; but most of us wound up settling for the bottle brush, or the pyramid centered over the upper lip, or variations thereupon). One has to back up a *kattabomman*, ideally with a hollow-cheeked, sharp-nosed, and steely-eyed countenance as well as big shoulders and bulging biceps (though the wiry Veerappan has defied that rule). In college only my friend Eddie could pull this moustache off. It made him look fierce, even though Eddie was a sweetheart, a pussycat.

Veerappan's *kattabomman* is the prototype: it is shaped like the Arc de Triomphe, all but concealing his lips, its thick, oversized pillars dwarfing his face and hanging bushily off the edge of his chin. A secondary growth leads back to the angle of his jaw. The moustache dominates every image I have seen of Veerappan over the years. At times it seems as if the moustache—not the man—is responsible for killing more than 130 people and 2,000 elephants, poaching 88,000 pounds of ivory, and smuggling sandal-



Koose Maniswami Veerappan, India's most wanted criminal

wood worth millions. The fellow peering out from behind the *kattabomman* is a mere appendage, powerless but for those tusks. After The Kidnapping, Veerappan's wife—who was captured and released and who no longer lives in the jungle—had this to say about her husband: "Only in appearance he looks frightening. But if you sit and talk to him, he is a very kind person." A pussycat, in other words.

But this mouser achieved new heights of notoriety when he kidnapped Rajkumar, last July 30. It is difficult for the rest of India (not to mention the rest of the world) to fathom the devotion and love that Rajkumar's fans in Karnataka (formerly the state of Mysore) have for him. With the advent of Star TV and the opening up of the economy to imports, all kinds of people and things have gained fame in India: Jennifer Lopez, Palm Pilots, *Baywatch*, Nokia cell phones, Monica Lewinsky. Then there is the homegrown fame of film stars in Bombay (or Mumbai, I should say). Twinkle, Tabu, Pooja, Dimple, Bobby, Sunny, Anil, and others adorn the covers of the glamour magazines and scandal

rags that scream from vendors' carts. These actors live on a well-lit stage, and every beauty pageant they judge, every opening they attend, is carefully recorded. Marriage, divorce, falling in and out of love, all take place within the same incestuous circle—or so it seems to us observers. Periodically the actors' houses are raided by I.T. (income-tax) officers looking for black (undeclared) money; great wads of it often show up behind paneling, stuffed into mattresses, or buried underground. We begin to imagine that the stars speak not like the rest of us but in Bollywood lines. (*Woman from a lousy family tree, did I raise you to show me this day? Or You have mixed my honor in the mud. Get out of the house. From today you are not my son and neither am I your father. Assume that your father is dead.*)

But Rajkumar's fame is a league apart from the ephemeral Bollywood variety: it is made of broad cloth, enduring even as he reaches his seventies. Rajkumar grew up in poverty—a fact he has never tried to hide. Even if his on-screen persona invariably sports a wig and a debonair moustache, and even if lately his leading ladies have been young enough to be his granddaughters, offscreen he happily appears as himself: a pleasant, avuncular septuagenarian with a bald pate, twinkling eyes, a large nose, and a winning smile. He has been an ardent champion of Kannada (the language of Karnataka) and its culture. At one time the state government wanted to make the teaching of Kannada in schools optional rather than mandatory. Rajkumar objected, and it was as if God had spoken. Legions of fans rallied to the cause, and the government backed down in a hurry. He never ran for office, though he could easily have done so and won. Even in his 007 kinds of roles he refused to imbibe alcohol or smoke cigarettes onscreen, not wanting to be a bad role model for his fans. He was in good health, thanks to his modest and temperate lifestyle, and he still had the habit of rising at four every morning to practice yoga and chant *bhajans*. He was always early for his shoots. This humility—so much the exception in the movie business—is why Rajkumar (or "Dr. Rajkumar," as he is known for an honorary degree) is so revered by the common man in Karnataka. His repertoire has included roles as popular Hindu deities and saints. The colorful posters and calendars that decorate living rooms and shops in Karnataka often use Rajkumar's face to depict these figures (there being no gold standard, after all), thus sealing this divine transference. His millions of fans believe they have a personal relationship with him: he is brother, father, son, faithful husband, avenging angel; he is me and he is you and he is ... God. "You won't see this happening in Bombay," a filmmaker told me a few days later, referring to such deification. "It's as though self-esteem in the south isn't innate but exists largely as something we project on our heroes."

The actors M. G. Ramachandran, of Tamil Nadu, and N. T. Rama Rao, of Andhra Pradesh, were similarly deified in their states. Both men used—some would say they were in-

INDIA TODAY/SIPA

voluntarily catapulted by—their popularity to become chief ministers (the equivalent of governors in America) in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and they went on, in a Reaganesque manner, to hugely influence politics on the national scene. I remember that MGR, even when old and sickly, insisted on appearing in a white Cossack hat and gangsta shades, his neck and jowls hidden by a white shawl, and with the few square inches of flesh that showed covered in white pancake makeup. It was as if he sensed that only MGR the icon had any power; to reveal the mortal beneath would destroy everything. Rajkumar has never had such worries.

I wanted to get close to the forest where the abduction took place and where Veerappan and Rajkumar were hidden at that moment. I flew from Madras to Coimbatore, a town famous for its textile mills. In Coimbatore I hired a car and drove to Satyamangalam, a town in the foothills of the Western Ghats, a chain of mountains on the edge of the Deccan Plateau. Outside the police station I met the man who was to be my guide, and we headed to the forest.

Rajkumar's kidnapping took place on a Sunday. The actor and his wife were visiting his native village of Gajanur, about 130 miles from the city of Bangalore, their principal residence. Rajkumar's ancestral property in Gajanur borders the Satyamangalam forest, a dense jungle preserve covering 2,300 square miles and nestled between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. Rajkumar loved to escape to this rural retreat, far from the urban bustle of Bangalore. He had just built a new house on the grounds but had not as yet moved into it, and the couple was spending the night in the old house. They sat on a straw mat, watching the local news on television. Rajkumar prepared a betel leaf for his after-dinner chew.

Suddenly men armed with Kalashnikov rifles burst in. Rajkumar recognized the leader as (or recognized the moustache of) Veerappan. The smuggler addressed the actor using the English word "Sir" and ordered him to come with them. Rajkumar, who has played a calm, composed hero many times in his movies, stayed true to that role. He told his wife not to worry. His hands were bound behind his back with nylon rope. Veerappan handed a cassette tape containing his demands to Rajkumar's wife, with instructions that she deliver it to the chief minister of Karnataka. The bandits, about a dozen of them, disappeared into the forest with their prize as quickly as they had come.

A few miles from Satyamangalam, just before we began the twisty mountain climb, we passed a Special Task Force camp. The STF has been in existence for a decade, its sole mission being to capture Veerappan (at which it has been spectacularly unsuccessful). STF men in khaki trousers slouched around, looking bored. Khaki shirts flapped on clotheslines behind them. My driver told me that the STF troops had been asked to "stand down" in order not to

jeopardize Rajkumar's life. Standing down seemed to come easy to this group, I thought as I studied them. Only their eyeballs moved as they watched my car go by.

The STF operation has swallowed many millions of rupees. Some editorialists describe the STF as an industry, and like many government industries it is also an inexhaustible source of graft. If the STF were actually to succeed in its mission, the well would dry up; therefore (according to this theory) there is no incentive to catch Veerappan. And besides, catching Veerappan would be a very dangerous undertaking.

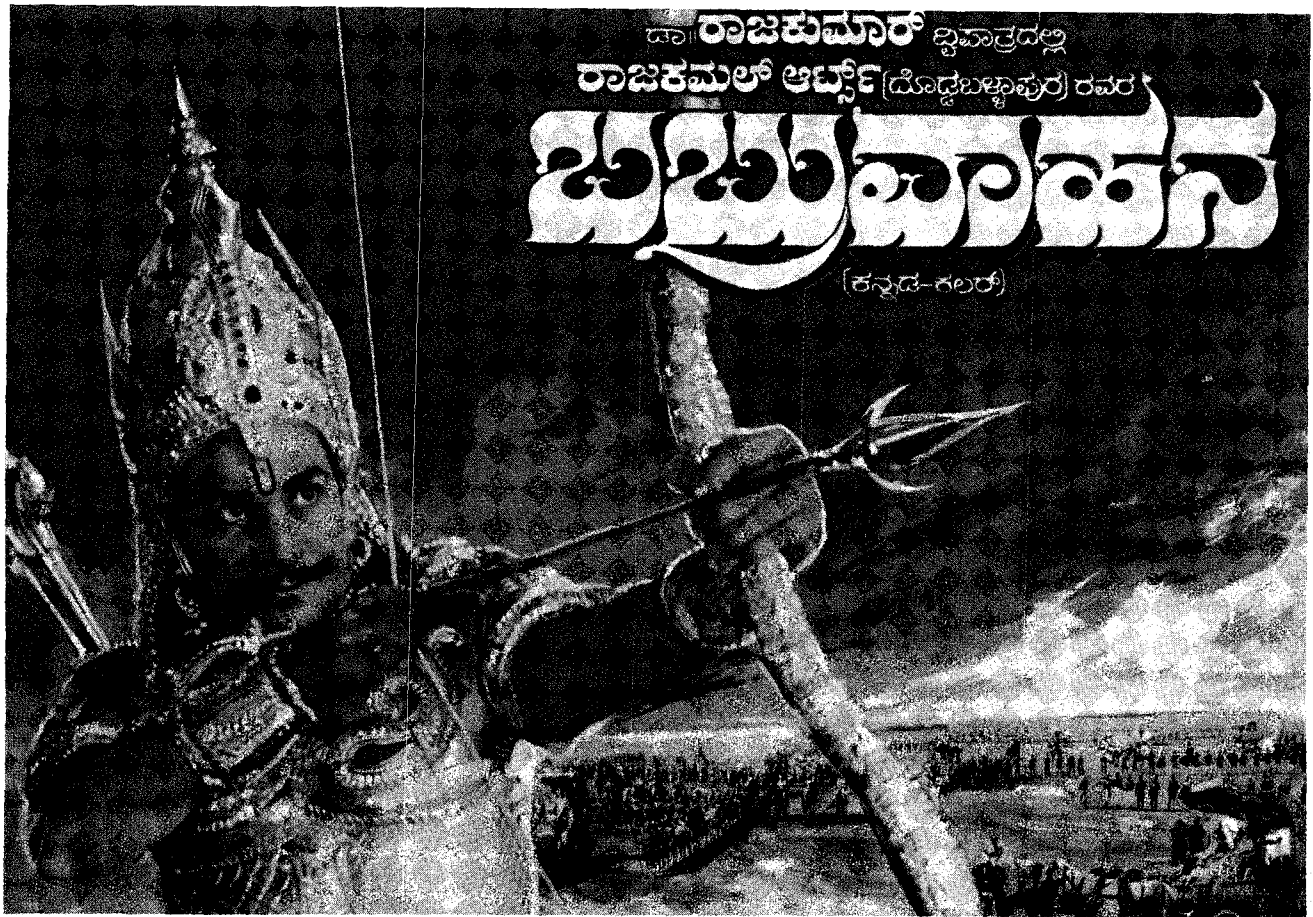
Past the STF post the steep and narrow mountain road began its seemingly endless hairpin bends. My driver leaned on the horn as we came to the blind spot in each turn, but we never heard answering bleats from lorries coming down. This sinuous road connects Tamil Nadu with Karnataka. Because Veerappan is a Tamil and Rajkumar is from Karnataka, the kidnapping had heightened tensions be-



The matinee idol Rajkumar, after Veerappan set him free

tween the two states. Commerce between them had almost come to a standstill. Large numbers of Tamils live and work in Karnataka, in the city of Bangalore in particular. In 1991 a dispute between the two states over sharing water from the Cauvery River had brought deadly violence against the Tamils in Karnataka. When word of Rajkumar's kidnapping spread in Bangalore, on "Black Monday," as it is now called, there were huge protests and many fears that Tamils were in danger again. One motorist was stabbed to death. Trains coming from Madras were stopped. Only a strong show of force by the police prevented a repeat of the bloodshed seen in the Cauvery riots.

We eventually arrived at the tiny village of Thimbam. Only two cars had passed us on the way. Both were hardy Ambassadors, with Gatsby-era contours, and both displayed PRESS signs on their windshields. The mountain air was brisk, nothing like the dry heat of the plains below. Thimbam sits close to the boundary between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu and is also on the edge of the forest. The village



COURTESY OF KCN MOVIES

A 1976 publicity poster featuring Rajkumar in one of his great roles, for a movie based on the epic Mahabharatha

was eerily quiet. I strolled down a path bordered by tall grass, keeping a keen eye out for cobras and conscious of the monkeys in the trees above who followed my progress. I soon came to a ledge that offered a sweeping view of a valley below. I lifted up my camera but lowered it again, because no lens could do justice to this vast valley and its dense forest, which deferred in the distance to mountains again, beyond which was a glimpse of more forest. Mudumalai forest, Bandipur forest, Satyamangalam forest—it is all one forest, and the names simply reflect its size and the direction from which one happens to approach it. In this huge preserve herds of elephants roam free along with all manner of other animals, of which wild boar are probably the most dangerous. Also somewhere in the forest, perhaps within hailing distance (Thimbam is a place where he has often surfaced), lurked Veerappan with his captive, Rajkumar.

Veerappan, who is now in his fifties, also grew up in poverty on the edge of the forest, and he has spent most of his life roaming within it. He moves from one spot to another, caching food in strategic locations. The terrain is difficult, and its few paths are well known to him; he has sown some of them with land mines. It is said that he has observers on hills and in treetops, and cannot easily be surprised. According to the Veerappan legend (a legend he helped to create), he was initiated into elephant poaching as a youth, and later

branched out into the business of smuggling sandalwood, which is as expensive as it is uncommon. He began making the news twenty years ago as a smuggler of ivory. “We target and shoot at the forehead,” he said in one interview, waxing eloquent about his first vocation. “[The elephant] slumps to death without even knowing that life is departing. Good death. To feed on its carcass birds come. Eight-point-four million living beings . . . Of all charity, feeding is the greatest.”

To become king of the jungle, Veerappan ruthlessly eliminated rival poachers, including a cousin of his. He was merciless with informers. Yet he helped villagers in places like Thimbam when they needed money for a wedding or funds to build a temple. In all likelihood the villagers here had worked for him in the past, hauling out headloads of ivory and sandalwood and receiving generous pay for their services. This generosity had won him a network of sympathizers who acted as his eyes and ears on the edges of his Sherwood Forest.

I had met briefly with a Veerappan sympathizer in Madras, a man who runs a lesser-known Tamil weekly magazine and who once served as an emissary for Veerappan. What he had to tell me was a rehash of what I had already heard and read. Nonetheless, I now had the eerie sense, as I stood looking over the forest, that because of that meeting Veerappan was aware of my presence.

How does one investigate a kidnapping when the main actors in the drama are hidden from sight? In Madras, Coimbatore, Satyamangalam, and now Thimbam, I had run into other Indian reporters—a congenial and helpful lot with whom I felt a strong kinship. (India's huge press corps, representing a plethora of papers and magazines, was something else new since my student days.) But we were all chewing on the same cud, the same slender set of "facts." The reporters offered speculation and rumors *sotto voce*. These, by virtue of frequent repetition, began to take on an air of unassailable truth. The outcome of this drama was predicted with emphatic punctuation: "Definitely!" "Undoubtedly!" "He will never ...!" "The government must ...!"

I knew one thing from my visit—the jungle, depicted in the press as an impenetrable overgrowth, was far from that. It was a dry deciduous forest, and walking into it was easy, with natural trails evident to the eye.

Things changed for Veerappan in the past decade, when India clamped down on the export of ivory. The bandit turned to the human trade, beginning a practice of kidnapping officials and even the occasional tourist or wildlife photographer. He demanded amnesty as well as money, and when the former was denied, he settled for the latter and released his victims. During the terms of the previous state governments in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka an intense effort was made to flush out Veerappan. The STF eight years ago was more engaged, and led by a fearless leader, Walter Davaram, who sported a bristling sergeant major's moustache every bit as fearsome as the *kattabomman* of his quarry. Many of Veerappan's associates were either captured or killed, and the gang was reduced from about a hundred to fewer than ten.

Somehow Veerappan survived. But his brother died in police custody (the police claim he committed suicide with a cyanide capsule), and that is said to have fueled Veerappan's hatred for the police. He became a man hunter. He used land mines to ambush police patrols. He killed and even beheaded some of his pursuers. One story that has been widely repeated to illustrate his ruthlessness (and the Veerappan myth has become increasingly indistinguishable from fact) is that he smothered his infant daughter to prevent her cries from giving away his forest hideout when the authorities came close.

After the decimation of his forces Veerappan seemed to have gone into hibernation; newly elected state governments in both Tamil Nadu and Karnataka had all but forgotten about him. The Rajkumar kidnapping came after a two-year lull in Veerappan's activities, and it was, for both state governments, a rude awakening. Veerappan's newfound strength and the Kalashnikovs in the gang members' hands clearly stunned the authorities.

The ransom request was published in the national papers the very day I was in Thimbam. It, too, was atypical,

in that the kidnapper did not ask for money. Instead he demanded that water from the Cauvery be released immediately to Tamil Nadu by the Karnataka government, and that compensation be paid to Tamil victims of the 1991 riots. He wanted the Karnataka government to declare Tamil the second language of the state, and he asked that a statue of the Tamil poet Thiruvalluvar be erected in Bangalore. Thiruvalluvar wrote his maxims and aphorisms around 2,000 years ago, and they are still used in everyday speech. There actually is a statue of Thiruvalluvar in Bangalore, but it is covered by gunny sacks. Bangalorians don't want it unveiled until and unless a statue of Sarvajna, a Kannada poet, is erected in Madras. Veerappan demanded the release of five militants belonging to Tamil liberation forces and of fifty-one members of his gang who had been captured in the wake of the killing of two police officers, Harikrishna and Shakeel Ahmed. All the evidence suggested that Veerappan had formed an alliance with disciplined Tamil militant groups who were sympathizers if not comrades of the Tamil revolutionaries waging war in Sri Lanka.

After two days I headed to Bangalore, where I found schools, colleges, liquor stores, and bars closed. As a mark of respect for Rajkumar, movie theaters, too, were shut, and all shooting on movie sets had come to a halt. Estimates put the losses to the film industry at the equivalent of \$660,000 a day. In the aftermath of The Kidnapping the evening news showed film stars offering prayers alongside saffron-robed priests. Newspapers carried a picture of a starlet rolling on a temple floor, in a form of penance and sacrifice for Rajkumar's safety. For his fans, whose clubs are organized by street and neighborhood, Rajkumar's life was more important than their own; one fan demonstrated this by throwing himself in front of a bus.

Bangalore, once known for being a gentle "garden city" with a mild climate, is now at the forefront of India's information-technology revolution, or "Eye Tee," as I heard repeatedly. The city is home to Infosys, WIPRO, and other world-class businesses. When I had visited the city five years earlier, pubs had been the new, new thing. Now it was cybercafés. Congestion, pollution, and rapid growth had predictably changed Bangalore, and Brigade Road, once the place to see and be seen, was a street I barely recognized. As I drove through town, I saw scars of Black Monday everywhere, in the form of shattered windowpanes. The damage was most striking in the high-rises under construction in the Diamond District, an Indian version of Silicon Valley. Ammu Joseph, a journalist friend of mine who has lived in Bangalore for a decade, pointed out that the rioters who gathered in the streets the day after The Kidnapping targeted the city's affluent and the symbols of affluence, such as automobile showrooms. Writing in *The Hindu*, she said of Bangalore,

Enormous fortunes have been made here ... but they have not trickled down in the form of more jobs, better



Veerappan as romantic icon: an image from R. R. Gopal's book

wages ... If some of the richest individuals in the country—even the world—live in Bangalore ... so surely do some of the poorest.

That night in Bangalore, I was with friends and relatives. The beer (obtained with great resourcefulness, since all liquor outlets were closed) flowed, and the food was fabulous. Like everyone else in southern India, we talked

about Veerappan and Rajkumar. "Why would anyone in America care about this?" I was asked, because in that room, at that moment, the story was really not of great importance. The riots of just a few days before were no joke, but the rest of it was a *tamasha* of sorts, an entertainment, although we were all nervous about how it would end. "High drama," I suggested. "Life imitating art imitating life. Robin Hood kidnaps Elvis Presley." But in a few minutes we had forgotten about Veerappan and Rajkumar. The forest I had walked in the previous day seemed a continent away.

There is another moustachioed character in this story: R. R. Gopal, the editor of a hard-hitting Tamil magazine called *Nakkheeran* (named after a mythical Tamil bard who offered a dare to Lord Siva). He, too, sports a *kat-tabomman* as his trademark. His magazine's style of investigative reporting has frequently embarrassed government figures and made *Nakkheeran* hugely popular. But in the Indian publishing world dangers abound for the aggressive journalist that are absent in the West: Gopal's printer, a man named Canesan, died after being released from police custody. He had been arrested in retaliation for the publication of stories critical of the then chief minister of Tamil Nadu, Jayalalitha (herself a former film star). Jayalalitha's government harassed *Nakkheeran* but could never close it down; many believe it was the magazine's revelation of her corruption that brought down her regime. Just hours before The Kidnapping one of Gopal's reporters was murdered by "unknown persons," according to newspaper reports.

Veerappan must have admired the pluck of the little magazine, because in past kidnappings he had sometimes requested that Gopal be the mediator, the

man with the briefcase. Gopal had played the role of jungle emissary several times, the last mission taking place three years earlier. His video crew brought images of the bandit and his forest abode into the living rooms of a hungry TV audience. Gopal wrote a book in Tamil on Veerappan. It is Gopal—perhaps by Veerappan's own design—who is responsible for the transformation of Veerappan from famous ban-

COURTESY OF NAKKHEERAN TAMIL BI-WEEKLY

dit to iconic figure, a superstar in Rajkumar's league. Yet Gopal's analysis of Veerappan has not always been flattering, and Veerappan is said to have been unhappy that Gopal profited at his expense. That may explain why, after the Rajkumar kidnapping, Veerappan asked for an emissary but pointedly did not ask for Gopal. Nevertheless, the governments of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, both of which had been at odds with Gopal, pressed the journalist into his familiar role of mediator.

While I was still in Bangalore, Gopal went to Thimbam, where he was forced to cool his heels for two days before Veerappan's associates finally made contact with him and took him to the hideout. He emerged a few days later with the story. Photographs he brought back showed Rajkumar seemingly in good spirits and looking well. "Whatever his desire, please fulfill it," the actor said on tape, using the honorific "Sir" to refer to his captor. "He is looking after us with love and affection. He fully trusts us, and we have confidence in him." Rajkumar, Gopal said, was enjoying nature and the outdoors and having long dialogues with his kidnapers. This was an unexpected twist, I thought. If, as Hindu tradition has it, there are four stages to a man's life (youth, family life, retirement, and renunciation), then Rajkumar had involuntarily entered the *sanyasa* phase: renouncing worldly duties and retreating to the forest to devote himself to meditation and spirituality.

Meanwhile, Veerappan, according to Gopal, was quoting Che Guevara and showing other signs of a transformation from robber to revolutionary. Perhaps he was also getting tips from the veteran actor on having a film made of his life. Veerappan was well aware of the precedent set by Phoolan Devi, a revolutionary who, after she surrendered and served time in jail, ran for and won a seat in Parliament. [See "India's Bandit Queen," by Mary Anne Weaver, November, 1996, *Atlantic*.] Her life story was made into the movie *Bandit Queen* by the director Shekhar Kapur, before he went on to make the Academy Award-winning *Elizabeth*. A diary of Veerappan's that was captured three years ago is said to have Shekhar Kapur's telephone number in it.

Gopal visited the forest several times over the next eight weeks. The governments of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka were ready to give in to Veerappan's demands, because they knew the public would not forgive them should anything happen to Rajkumar. The stumbling block now was the elderly father of Shakeel Ahmed, one of the policemen killed by Veerappan's gang. The father obtained a stay from the Supreme Court to block the release of the fifty-one prisoners connected with the ambush in which his son died. Meanwhile, the central government in Delhi and a sizable portion of the journalistic community and the public, at least outside Karnataka, were also against releasing these prisoners on the bandit's say-so.

In Bangalore rumors were flying. The most persistent one had to do with one of Rajkumar's sons, who is involved

in the granite business; some granite quarries lie in Veerappan territory. According to this story, Rajkumar's son failed to pay money he owed to granite dealers, and this is why his father was kidnapped. As the days passed, the rumors became more inventive and surreal: Gopal, the journalist, according to one, *is* Veerappan! According to another, Rajkumar was fed up with his wife and son, and engineered this whole thing to get a little forest R&R. "Definitely!"

It was the hundredth day of The Kidnapping. In the Indian movie business a hundred days is a significant milestone: when a film has a theatrical run that long, it is cause for celebration. But the story was no longer on the front pages of Indian papers. The crowds holding vigil outside Rajkumar's house had thinned considerably, and life in Bangalore was almost back to normal. The likelihood of a dramatic police or military operation à la Entebbe was remote, because the risk to Rajkumar would be unacceptable. Veerappan, too, was in an awkward situation: should he kill Rajkumar, he would unleash a backlash against ethnic Tamils. By all reports, Veerappan was tired of life on the run. He was bothered by asthma and chronic intestinal ailments. He wanted out of the forest.

N. Ram, the editor of *Frontline*, a respected fortnightly, arranged for me to get an interview with Gopal in his office at *Nakkheeran*, in Madras. It was a Friday evening, the 103rd day of The Kidnapping, and a surprise shower had left puddles on the streets and sidewalks which mirrored the gay lights strung over shop awnings. Colors seemed strangely brighter in the rain's aftermath: purple and orange saris in store windows, white jasmine strung through coconut-shined hair, yellow auto-rickshaws darting between lime-green Pallavan transport buses. I left my sandals on a porch and climbed the narrow stairs of a residential building to its second floor. I entered a largish room partitioned into cubicles and lit by fluorescent lights that didn't seem to reach the corners. The reporters and other employees were all men, all swarthy, and all sporting moustaches, but none wore a *kattabomman* like Gopal's. A shelf running around the room at head height displayed awards and trophies, most featuring a likeness of Gopal, or Gopal with Veerappan. There was a bust of Veerappan in a glass case: the inscription indicated that it was a gift to Gopal from a grateful kidnap victim. Larger trophies had the usual silver figurine replaced by cardboard-backed full-figure color cutouts of Veerappan and Gopal facing each other like stags about to lock antlers, their moustaches bristling. One could be forgiven for thinking that the office belonged to both men, so prominent was Veerappan's image. My escort whispered to me that some of these trophies were awards that Gopal gives to his best reporters, or his best distributors. His reporters are fiercely loyal to him; I sensed both a siege mentality and a strong esprit de corps at *Nakkheeran*.

An unsmiling Gopal came out and took me into his air-

conditioned office, which has a window overlooking the newsroom where his staff works. Under the glass top of his desk were displayed photographs, including the first ones of Veerappan published in *Nakkheeran*, relating to some of Gopal's most important investigative coups. Speaking in Tamil liberally sprinkled with English, Gopal told me that his first foray into Veerappan territory had resulted from his frustration at having to reuse an old police photograph of Veerappan every time there was news of the bandit: "One time I changed the size, next time the tint. But I was fed up with having to use the same picture." He offered a cash reward to the first of his reporters who brought him a photo of Veerappan. In 1993 one of them bravely walked into the forest and came back with the prize. This was at a time when several hundred Special Task Force people were supposedly looking for Veerappan. "The first time I saw the negative, my hair was standing on end," Gopal told me. "I had to process the photo secretly. I had to pinch myself to see if it was real." He was cautious about discussing Veerappan or Rajkumar, because in the absence of any real news the only sport in town was to magnify or distort the least utterance or gesture of Gopal. New members had joined the team negotiating for Rajkumar's release, apparently without consulting Gopal. Much had been made of this in the press, but Gopal said it did not bother him. "I am the official government emissary. I have to see this through. My only goal is that Rajkumar should be released." I sensed that he was tired of Veerappan—as Ringo Starr must be tired of constantly being asked what Paul is really like.

I had walked into Gopal's office prepared to dislike him—envious, I suppose, of his closeness to the story. Instead I found myself quite taken with him. If, as his critics have said, he has greatly enriched himself on the Veerappan story, there was little evidence of it. He walked me downstairs to my car; he would remain in the office for an hour or two more, he said, and then head to the printing plant for a final okay of the next issue of *Nakkheeran*. Asked for one last thought about Rajkumar, he would say only "I am sure he will be released within the next few days."

Indeed, a few days later, when it seemed that no one other than Gopal really expected it, Rajkumar was released. On November 16 the thespian appeared in Bangalore, helicoptered in from the forest. The pilot of the helicopter made two landings in the city, as if unsure exactly where to take him. Finally Rajkumar was delivered to the Vidhana Soudha, the seat of government, where an unusual press conference was staged in the assembly building. Rajkumar, dressed in a simple white shirt and dhoti, appeared dazed and overwhelmed by the outpouring of joy from thousands of fans outside. But then, what should have been the clear denouement of this prolonged abduction instead became a source of further confusion. Referring to the negotiating team that had last visited the forest, Rajku-

mar gave credit for his release to one of its members, a woman who called herself Dr. Banu. Rajkumar said that she had coached him to act ill and then persuaded Veerappan to let him go. At the press conference, while she periodically whispered into his ear, Rajkumar described her as a goddess: "It was as if I saw Devi Shakti in her."

But the next day Banu turned out not to be a doctor at all. The rescuer of Rajkumar was, in fact, in the granite business. *The Times of India* uncovered court records showing that she had been accused in 1996 of cheating an Italian granite businessman to the tune of about \$100,000. Her links, if any, to Rajkumar's son or to Veerappan are unclear. The goddess, without explanation, canceled a press conference she was to hold. Rajkumar, contradicting what he had said in front of millions of television viewers all over India, released a statement downplaying her role and giving credit to government emissaries. There were strong rumors of a big payout to Veerappan and his militant Tamil partners, and strong rumors that the whole kidnapping had come out of a granite deal gone sour. Among people I talked to in Bangalore there was growing resentment: if in fact The Kidnapping had little to do with Tamil nationalism, but instead arose from a private matter involving Rajkumar's son and some granite dealers, then the millions of dollars it had cost the state of Karnataka should be reimbursed. There was brave talk of night-vision goggles, heat sensors, and going into the jungle to capture Veerappan. There was equally brave talk of taking politicians and STF members to task for the atrocities committed against villagers and other detainees in the name of catching Veerappan. Rajkumar declined to be interviewed.

When I finally left Bangalore, I drove past the statue of Thiruvalluvar, which sits, still wrapped in gunny sacks, on a pedestal in the center of a traffic circle. I left with a sense that the story was even murkier than when I began. But this is the nature of things in India: the harder one scratches, the more complexity is revealed. I thought back to Ganesha Chaturthi, the festival celebrating Ganesha, the elephant-headed god (the most popular of Hindu deities, the god of wisdom and prudence), where clay images of Ganesha are always immersed in lakes and rivers and other bodies of water. In recent years the festival had become more and more elaborate, and a major element of entertainment had been thrown in: film screenings and dance performances were now common. Of late, too, intricate tableaux had been constructed around the statue of Ganesha. In 1999 the tableaux featured Indian soldiers, the heroes of the Kargil war with Pakistan over Kashmir. But last September in Bangalore one tableau had Ganesha leading Rajkumar out of the wilderness. And there, peeping through the trees like a Cheshire cat who can never leave his forest, was Veerappan. ▀

ON THE WEB: Mary Anne Weaver's article "India's Bandit Queen" can be found at www.theatlantic.com/issues/96nov/bandit/bandit.htm.

SHOCK AND DISBELIEF

Electroconvulsive therapy was once psychiatry's most terrifying tool—blunt, painful, and widely abused. It is now a safe and effective treatment for a wide range of mental illnesses. But an unlikely trio of activist groups stands against it

BY DANIEL SMITH

.....

On the cover of a pamphlet I was sent recently appears a photograph of an elderly man with bright bolts of electricity shooting outward from his temples. His teeth are clenched. His eyes are squeezed shut. His hair is standing on end. Holding the man's head secure is a leather strap that resembles the restraint on a prisoner in the electric chair.

This is electroconvulsive therapy (ECT)—the psychiatric use of an electric current to stimulate a grand mal seizure—as seen through the eyes of the Citizens Commission on Human Rights, a lobbying group founded by the Church of Scientology and the most active and well-organized anti-ECT group in existence. It is a grim view, invoking coercion, barbarity, anguish—everything negative that has ever been associated with psychiatry. It is also the common view.

Last fall I saw a patient receive ECT at McLean Hospital, a private psychiatric facility in Belmont, Massachusetts. There, in a well-lit treatment room, attended by a nurse, a psychiatrist, and an anesthesiologist, a middle-aged man suffering from hallucinations and depression lay unconscious on his back while two electrode paddles were placed on his head. A button was pressed, and the patient's right foot twitched lightly. Shortly afterward the patient awoke and was given a snack before being escorted back to his room.

The contrast between image and reality is surprising. The procedure I saw at McLean reflects the way ECT has been administered for years, as cautiously and as formally as any other medical procedure—perhaps even more so, because of the awareness psychiatrists have of ECT's reputation as savage. Yet the popular image of ECT has persisted, sustained almost single-handedly, it sometimes seems, by the 1975 movie *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, the release of which coincided with a decline in the use of ECT. In 1980 less than three percent of all psychiatric inpatients were being treated with the procedure, and by 1983, thirty-three states were in some way regulating it.

Although the public seemed willing to let ECT fall into obsolescence, many psychiatrists felt that they were losing a valuable and irreplaceable treatment. In 1985 the National Institutes of Health, in Bethesda, Maryland, called a three-day conference on electroconvulsive therapy. The first day of the conference passed without incident, as experts delivered lectures. On the second day, however, during an open discussion period, anger erupted on the floor of the conference hall. Former patients and even a few clinicians began protesting loudly. One of those present was Max Fink, then a professor of psychiatry at the State University of New York at Stony Brook and a pioneer in modern ECT research. As Fink remembers it, "They were shouting, 'How dare you even consider electroshock as a possibility! It has no place in the world! Everybody who does electroshock should be in jail!'"

When the conference resumed, a panel of "nonadvocate" experts forged a consensus statement in which they observed, with standoffish delicacy,

Electroconvulsive therapy is the most controversial treatment in psychiatry. The nature of the treatment itself, its history of abuse, unfavorable media presentations, compelling testimony of former patients, special attention by the legal system, uneven distribution of ECT use among practitioners and facilities, and uneven access by patients all contribute to the controversial context in which the consensus panel has approached its task.

Today ECT has strengthened its position in the profession. Many psychiatrists, whether or not they actively administer the treatment, have come to appreciate its ability to ameliorate a range of mental illnesses, from depression to some forms of schizophrenia and catatonia. A 1993 commentary in *The New England Journal of Medicine* stated, "Electroconvulsive therapy is more firmly established than ever as an important method of treating certain severe forms of depression." The first phase of a National Institute of Men-



tal Health-supported study, to be published this spring, found that ECT produced a greater than 95 percent remission rate in psychotically depressed patients—vastly higher than the rate for any drug on the market. When I talked with Fink recently, he told me, “ECT is the most effective antidepressant, antipsychotic, anticatatonic we have today.” Other psychiatrists have been even more enthusiastic. One, T. George Bidder, has written that ECT is “one of the most effective treatments in all of medicine—with a therapeutic efficacy, in properly selected cases, comparable

to some of the most potent and specific treatments available, such as penicillin in pneumococcal pneumonia.” Such endorsements have led to what looks like a renaissance for ECT: it is estimated that 100,000 patients are treated with it each year—nearly triple the number cited for 1980 by the NIMH.

Yet the attacks on the treatment are as virulent as ever. Activists continue to push for prohibitive legislation. In 1997 a bill that would effectively have made administering ECT a criminal act, punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000

ARTHUR TRESS

and/or up to six months in jail, was narrowly defeated in Texas. ECT has virtually disappeared from state-run psychiatric facilities, owing in large part to government regulation. To be treated, patients must almost always gain access to a private or academic hospital. This means that ECT is very rarely an option for poor patients—those without adequate insurance or access to information, or without the means to travel, for example, to a distant, well-equipped university hospital. A 1995 article in the *American Journal of Psychiatry* found that ECT was unavailable in more than a third of the 317 metropolitan areas nationwide that it surveyed. “The situation has reversed itself from where it was decades ago,” says Richard Weiner, a professor of psychiatry at Duke University and the head of the American Psychiatric Association’s Committee on ECT. “Many ECT patients used to be asylum patients. Now it’s very hard to get ECT in such places, and its use has shifted to general hospitals and private psychiatric hospitals.”

The stigma attached to ECT is in some ways a holdover from less scrupulous days of psychiatry. But one of the main reasons many people still consider ECT to be archaic and even destructive is that it continues to be painted as such by an unlikely trio of activist groups: a handful of former ECT patients, some dissenting psychiatrists, and the Church of Scientology. These groups have agitated for the complete elimination of ECT. They have pushed legislative attempts to limit or ban ECT. They have initiated and supported lawsuits against psychiatrists, hospitals, and ECT-device manufacturers. They claim that ECT is authoritarian, violent, and representative of everything that is wrong with the profession of psychiatry. And despite all medical evidence to the contrary, people are listening to them.

“A CRACK OF ELECTRICITY”

Electroconvulsive therapy emerged during a bleak period for psychiatry. In the first third of the twentieth century not much could be done for the mentally ill. Psychoanalysis, the dominant method of treatment, proved helpful to some wealthy patients complaining of the so-called “minor illnesses”: melancholy and neurosis. But it didn’t do much for patients with more-systemic afflictions, such as schizophrenia and manic-depressive illness. These patients were merely warehoused in vast state asylums, where conditions were appalling. Patients were abused, shackled, even surgically sterilized. Psychiatry’s job seemed to be no more than brutal custodianship; psychiatrists could do no more than hope that their patients would recover spontaneously from their illnesses. Under these desperate circumstances some psychiatrists began experimenting with radical treat-

ments: insulin coma, transorbital lobotomy, malarial fever.

One of these “somatic therapies”—Metrazol shock—seemed particularly promising, given the theory (now known to be untrue) that a “biological antagonism” existed between epilepsy and schizophrenia. A schizophrenic patient was injected with Metrazol, a drug similar to camphor. After a few minutes the patient would undergo a full-blown seizure: all the muscles in his body would convulse violently, his back would arch, his limbs would flail, his breathing would become shallow. Often he would vomit. It was a gruesome ordeal. The historian Edward Shorter, in *A History of Psychiatry* (1997), reported that a Swiss psychiatrist stopped using the treatment because it caused “agonizing fears of dying and crumbling away,” and that a British doctor spoke of “the unseemly and tragic farce of an unwilling patient being pursued by a posse of nurses with me, a fully charged syringe in my hand, bringing up the rear.” And yet, strangely, Metrazol shock worked pretty well. “Convulsive therapy,” as it came to be called, opened wide vistas of possibility.

But no one really understood why inducing seizures made patients better. Even today there are only educated guesses. Some subscribe to the neuroendocrine hypothesis, which states that seizures cause a shift in the body’s hormonal system. Others subscribe to what has been called the anti-convulsant view, which holds that, paradoxically, the whole purpose of causing a seizure is to tap into the brain’s ability to stop that seizure naturally. In other words, the brain’s anticonvulsant mechanism may alter the brain’s neurochemistry, acting as a built-in antidepressant. Still others believe that it is the seizures themselves that change the level of chemicals in the brain. In 1990 a group of articles in the journal *Neuropsychopharmacology* examined all three possibilities without drawing any conclusions.

Regardless, from the beginning convulsive therapy proved promising. Ugo Cerletti, in the 1930s the chief of the Clinic for Nervous and Mental Diseases at the University of Rome, was among those who were impressed. But he considered that electricity might cause seizures more quickly, and thus in a less harrowing manner, than Metrazol. Earlier Cerletti had tested the neurological effects of electricity by conducting experiments on dogs. His first attempts were inauspicious: because he put one electrode in the dog’s mouth and one in its anus, the bulk of the current passed through the dog’s heart; half the dogs died of cardiac arrest. Lucio Bini, one of Cerletti’s assistants, solved this problem by transferring the electrodes to the dogs’ temples. Cerletti and his staff worked tirelessly, experimenting on animals that were brought to them each week

Despite all medical evidence to the contrary, detractors claim that ECT is authoritarian, violent, and representative of everything that is wrong with psychiatry.

by dog catchers. The results supported their hopes: it seemed that using electricity was an effective way to produce an epileptic fit. Before applying it to a human being, Cerletti's assistants visited a Rome slaughterhouse to observe an electrical device that was being used to incapacitate pigs prior to slaughter. They discovered that there was a wide margin between the amount of electricity that would create a seizure and the amount that would kill.

In the spring of 1938 "electroshock," as Cerletti called it, was ready to be tested on a human being. The subject was a Milanese man the Roman police had found wandering in the train station without a ticket, mumbling gibberish to himself. Shorter described the inaugural treatment.

The patient, his head shaved, seemed quite indifferent to what was going on. A nurse placed the electrodes on his temples while an orderly put a rubber tube between his teeth to prevent him from biting his tongue ... There was a crack of electricity. The patient's muscles jolted once ...

"Let's step it up to 90," said Cerletti.

Another electrical crack. Another spasm. The patient lay motionless for a minute, then began to sing.

"We'll try it one last time at a higher voltage," said Cerletti, "*poi basta* [and then enough]."

At this point, the patient said, in a perfectly calm and reasonable voice, as though answering an exam question, "Look out! The first is pestiferous, the second mor-tiferous." The residents looked at each other puzzled.

Despite the primitive application, the patient responded quite well. He had ten more treatments and was released, "in good condition and well-oriented." After a year he had not relapsed significantly. This was no small feat; no one could remember any experiment that had shown nearly such promising results. Thereafter ECT spread quickly to European hospitals. By 1940 it had appeared in the United States. Psychiatrists were enthusiastic. One, whom Shorter quoted, wrote in the *British Journal of Psychiatry*, "Without ECT I would not have lasted out in psychiatry, as I would not have been able to tolerate the sadness and hopelessness of most mental illnesses."

ECT was a great step up. Patients did not vomit, as they did in the course of Metrazol shock, and they did not experience as much psychological trauma. But they did still have to suffer the effects of muscular convulsions, which were frequently excruciating, and which have contributed to the persistent image of ECT as a brutal form of treatment. Thrashing around on the treatment table, many patients bit their tongues and cheeks. Many suffered broken bones or serious spinal injuries. Sometimes a gang of orderlies and nurses was needed to prevent the patient from tossing himself off the table altogether. In addition, patients suffered memory loss. They would awake confused, unsure of where they were or what had happened, often forgetting events of the preceding weeks or months.

ECT was also drastically overused. Doctors in some hospitals would treat dozens of patients in one giant room, wheeling the device on a cart from bed to bed; patients were forced to watch the ordeal of those who came before them. One doctor in England treated some of his patients more than a thousand times each. In the 1950s Ewen Cameron, a psychiatrist at McGill University, in Montreal, "depatterned" his patients by giving them twelve treatments daily. Milledgeville State Hospital, in Georgia, for a time the largest asylum in the United States, had perhaps the worst history of abuse: it used what was known as the Georgia Power Cocktail to punish uncooperative patients.

The publicized experiences of famous patients treated privately with ECT bolstered the evidence against the treatment. The poet Sylvia Plath was subjected to ECT and wrote about it in her autobiographical novel *The Bell Jar*: "Then something bent down and took hold of me and shook me like the end of the world. Whee-ee-ee-ee-ee, it shrilled, through an air crackling with blue light, and with each flash a great jolt drubbed me till I thought my bones would break and the sap fly out of me like a split plant." (Later in the novel the narrator had a less unpleasant ECT experience.) Ernest Hemingway underwent a course of ECT at the Mayo Clinic, in Rochester, Minnesota, and wrote to his biographer, A. E. Hotchner: "What is the sense of ruining my head and erasing my memory, which is my capital, and putting me out of business? It was a brilliant cure, but we lost the patient." Soon afterward Hemingway shot himself. In 1972 Senator Thomas Eagleton had to withdraw as the presidential candidate George McGovern's running mate after it was revealed that he had been treated with ECT. And, of course, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* bundled all the public's negative associations into the disturbing image of Jack Nicholson, mocking and playful one moment, writhing on a table the next, and finally catatonic—the result, in actuality, not of the ECT he received but of an off-camera lobotomy.

ECT all but disappeared in the 1970s, eclipsed by psychiatric drugs, which brought about, as Shorter called it, the "triumph of the biological." More and more drugs came on the market, offering a sophisticated biochemical arsenal for treating mental illness. In the 1980s, owing to more-advanced neuro-imaging techniques, physiological sources were found for schizophrenia and manic-depressive illness. As is by now well known, psychiatry and neurology edged toward a permanent intimacy. Electroconvulsive therapy seemed more than a little outmoded.

But drugs have not been the complete answer to mental illness. They were and still are a frustratingly inexact method of treatment—with a long wait between the first pill and any sign of relief. Often they don't work at all. This can be fatal for a patient who is suicidally depressed. Moreover, some patients prove resistant to medication.

The psychiatric community set out to modernize ECT and improve its image. Researchers worked with manufacturers to modernize ECT devices, outfitting them with equipment to monitor heart rate and brain activity and upgrading the electricity used. The 1985 NIH conference was followed by a 1990 report by the American Psychiatric Association committee charged with introducing better standards for treatment. The problem of physical injuries had been solved by the administration of fast-acting anesthesia and muscle relaxants, which confine the effects of a seizure to the brain. Clinicians implemented an informed-consent procedure that detailed every aspect of ECT along with its benefits and risks—including the (slim) possibility of death. (According to the most recent report of the APA Committee on ECT, published this year, one death occurs for every 80,000 treatments.) ECT became safer and more exact, and psychiatrists used it more selectively. Today ECT is frequently used to treat the elderly, a population highly susceptible to mental illness and sensitive to the side effects of medication. Because drugs can cause birth defects, ECT is also often the preferred psychiatric treatment for women during the early stages of pregnancy.

Some side effects do remain. Memory loss is the most prevalent and is the primary reason that ECT is not used more often. Patients may have gaps in their memory affecting several months preceding treatment, and may also have trouble “laying down” new memories for a couple of weeks following treatment. In a small number of patients these problems can persist for a much longer period of time. But to some people, the fact that ECT causes any memory loss at all is unacceptable. ECT’s detractors focus their objections on this side effect.

A PATIENT’S COMPLAINT

Linda Andre, a tall, attractive woman in her early forties, is the director of the Committee for Truth in Psychiatry, a loose-knit organization of 500 former ECT patients. I was directed to CTIP by Max Fink, who has had numerous run-ins with Andre. At a talk Fink gave some years ago in New York, Andre stood up in the audience and loudly protested his association with Somatics, one of the two largest U.S. manufacturers of ECT devices. (Fink says he has no financial links with any ECT-device manufacturer.) Andre has been to many psychiatric conferences. She is hardly ever afforded official time to speak. More often she simply rises from the crowd.

When Andre and I met recently, I mentioned Fink, and she shook her head. “Ah, Max Fink, my dear friend. Oh, that man. That man. Not an honest and ethical individual, shall

we say? I cannot believe that the scientific press lets the stuff he says get through. I’m sure he told you that no one ever had memory loss from ECT, except maybe around the time of ECT itself, and that they don’t want to remember. He probably told you that we’re just exaggerating. And everybody has some memory loss. He keeps these positions because he can. Shock is his baby. He’s been associated with it longer than anyone.” Fink, it became clear, represents for Andre the epitome of psychiatric deception. In an unpublished article on ECT, Andre has written,

After 50 years of giving electroshock, I can’t believe Fink knows any less about the extent of permanent memory loss and disability than I do. I believe he and his fellow apologists are making a value judgment about the worth of their patients’ memories and lives, and deciding on that basis to essentially trade brain damage for temporary relief of depression.

Andre has been the director of CTIP since 1992. She told me she first became involved in the organization in 1985, several months after she received fifteen “shock”

treatments at the Payne Whitney Psychiatric Clinic, in New York City. Andre takes exception to the term “ECT,” dismissing “electroconvulsive therapy” as “the elegant new PR-conscious name for ‘electroshock.’” She says that she doesn’t remember anything

about her treatments, and that she was committed to the clinic against her will.

“Everything I know about getting electroshock is what I’ve been told,” she says. “I don’t remember anything about it. From what I understand, my brother basically tricked me into going into the hospital at a time when I was going through a lot of problems and had become a pain in the ass to him.” Andre says she escaped from the hospital several times before her treatment began, and that each time her brother recommitted her. When she was finally released, she says, she had both retrograde and anterograde amnesia: she couldn’t remember much of the previous four years, and she had difficulty creating memories of new events. One day, at home, she heard a woman named Marilyn Rice talking on the radio about ECT.

Rice is something of a legend in the world of ECT. In 1974 the distinguished medical writer Berton Roueché published an article about her in *The New Yorker*, disguising Rice, who had received ECT to treat a serious bout of depression, as “Natalie Parker.” The article, titled “As Empty as Eve,” depicted Rice’s experience as a nightmarish erasure of memory. “There is a harrowing sense of confusion,” Roueché wrote, “and then a full awakening in the midnight

*The psychiatrist walked over to the
ECT device and pressed a button.
The patient’s foot seized, as though
experiencing a sudden itch,
and after ten seconds that was it.*

dark of total amnesia.” Her sense of purpose bolstered by the article, Rice formed CTIP and began accumulating documentation that ECT causes, as she put it, “psychiatrically-induced brain damage.” She wrote letters to psychiatrists, government officials, newspapers and magazines, and other potential allies, and created a small network of ECT “survivors,” as she called them. To one doctor she wrote, “I could easily set up a psychiatric hospital as good as yours. I would just put the patients down on the sidewalk and interfere with their cerebral function by dropping flower pots on their heads.”

Andre got Rice’s phone number from the radio station and called her. The two became very close, and when Rice died, of heart failure, in 1992, Andre took over as director.

Can ECT cause a complete erasure of memory, as Andre claims? Most psychiatrists insist that it can’t, and that side effects are usually slight. Roland Kohloff, the principal tympanist for the New York Philharmonic, was treated several times with ECT after slipping into severe depression. Each time he quickly rebounded and went back to work. “After you get a series,” he told me recently, “there will be for a while some short-term-memory problems. I might not remember something I had done a couple of weeks before, or somebody called and I don’t remember that they called. But nothing major; and then, as time goes on, it gets better. Look at Vladimir Horowitz”—the concert pianist, who has also been treated with ECT. “He was able to play billions of notes: Chopin, Tchaikovsky. The worst for me was that I’d forget something and my wife would say, ‘Oh, I told you a couple of weeks ago but you didn’t remember: you had the ECT.’”

What patients like Andre are complaining about is something more serious. They argue that ECT can result

in wholesale amnesia, along with a steep decline in IQ. At the age of twenty, Andre says, her IQ was 156. Three years after her ECT it was around 112, and it does not appear to have increased since. Whether or not this is a result of ECT is hard to determine. Norman Endler, a psychologist who was himself treated with ECT, and Emmanuel Persad, a psychiatrist, wrote in their book *Electroconvulsive Therapy: The Myths and the Realities* (1988), “There is no conclusive proof that ECT causes permanent brain damage.” What muddies the issue is that mental illness itself can cause cognitive defects, including a drop in IQ and in the ability to retain new memories. The informed-consent document for ECT used by Charles Kellner, a professor of psychiatry at the Medical University of South Carolina and the editor of *The Journal of ECT*, although scrupulous in its delineation of even the most severe side effects, states, “In part because psychiatric conditions themselves produce impairments in learning and memory, many patients actually report that their learning and memory functioning is improved after ECT.”

In some cases a profound deterioration of cognitive ability is clearly the result of mental illness. Harold Sackeim, the chief of biological psychiatry at the New York State Psychiatric Institute, in New York City, and probably the most prolific ECT researcher in the world, told me about a colleague whose son had a psychotic break while a student at Harvard and now can’t hold down a job at a fast-food restaurant.

Andre, Sackeim says, has shown him her medical records; he says that she may have experienced a similar breakdown. But there is no way to know for sure whether ECT was the culprit in Andre’s loss of IQ and memory. “In very rare cases,” Sackeim acknowledges, “there will be profound memory loss. People can lose years of their lives.”

Jeremy Coplan, a professor of psychiatry at SUNY Downstate Medical Center, in Brooklyn, who, like many other psychiatrists, doesn’t actively treat with ECT but does refer patients for it, told me that the issue of memory loss is, unfortunately, often downplayed by psychiatrists. “For instance, someone may forget where the bathroom is in their house—at least temporarily,” he said. “There can be a profound disruption of memory—not a minor thing if you put yourself in the patient’s shoes.” But, he said, it’s a matter of risk versus benefit. “It’s better that the patient is temporarily disoriented than seriously depressed for years.”

The effect that ECT has on memory has been notoriously hard for ECT practitioners to concede. “The field has been under attack for such a long period of time,” Sackeim says, “that a defensive posture was developed where limitations of the treatment were not acknowledged. So people complained of profound cognitive effects, and [those effects] were attributed to an ongoing psychopathology and essentially dismissed. I think that hurt the field of ECT.”

Lately doctors have been taking special pains to spell

BELLES LETTRES

Slowly, slowly, so as not to awaken
himself, he scratches his ear.

The sun is out—that is, not.
Sheets and her rucked-up slip

line his back in canals (a misunderstood
Martian) where sprout and curl hairs

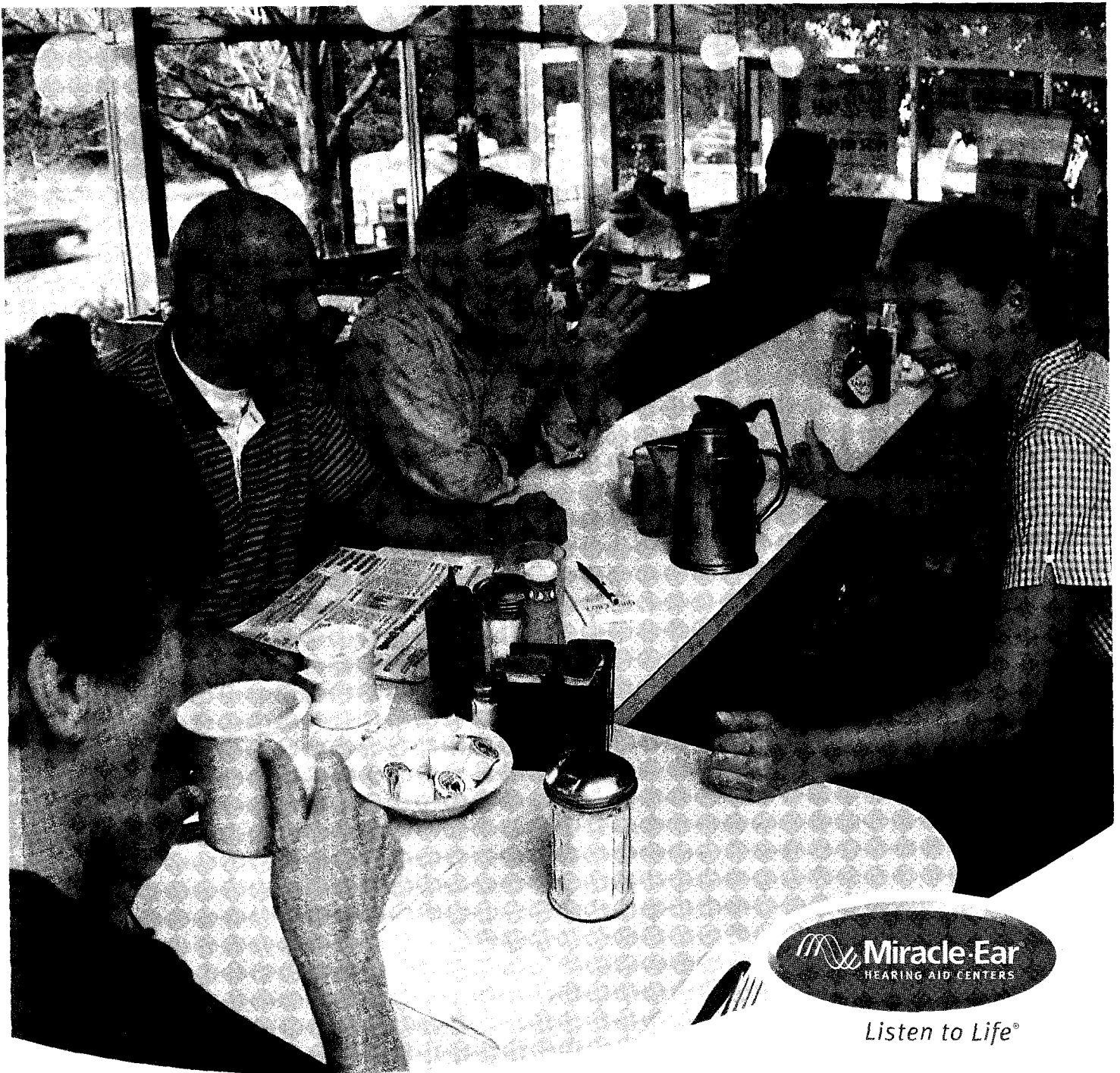
he grows as easily as he shrugs off
the phone-call assault,

the covers coming over in waves.
Does he growl, Nice night

in bed, or, sniffing. It could rain?
He’s reading her instead.

—TERESE SVOBODA

With better hearing, even the coffee tastes richer.



Listen to Life®

A HEARING AID FROM MIRACLE-EAR® might just make your life a little richer, a little sweeter and more satisfying.*
CALL TOLL FREE 1-888-798-1770 for the **MIRACLE-EAR HEARING AID CENTER** nearest you — and find out about our
30-DAY TRY-BEFORE-YOU-BUY† program. It's your opportunity to try our custom-made hearing aids for a full
month without any obligation to buy. You may be surprised how enhanced your life becomes when your
hearing is better. www.miracle-ear.com

*Hearing aids do not restore natural hearing. Individual experiences vary depending on the severity of hearing loss, accuracy of evaluation, proper fit and ability to adapt to amplification.
†Fitting fees apply.

©2000 Miracle-Ear, Inc.

NATA 7597/A

**PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED**

out the risks that patients face. "I tell all my patients that they are going to have memory loss," Sackeim says. "In the vast, vast majority of patients that will be limited to a few months surrounding the course of treatment. There will not be a blank slate. But there will be gaps in memory. And the vast majority of patients say that's a small price to pay for getting well. It's not really a big deal to them. But I also tell them that in very rare instances it can be more extensive, and that no one can tell for certain who is going to experience that and who is not."

It has taken some time for a full disclosure to seep into the official literature. The report published this year by the APA Committee on ECT contains that organization's first substantial discussion of the possibility of serious memory problems.

A DOCTOR'S COMPLAINT

There was a moment at the 1985 NIH conference, Peter Breggin recalls, when patients who had had positive experiences with ECT were asked to step up to the lectern and tell about their illness and recovery. Breggin, who is the director of the International Center for the Study of Psychiatry and Psychology, in Bethesda, Maryland, had already delivered a lecture titled "Neuropathology and Cognitive Dysfunction From ECT," and he listened intently as the patients spoke. Afterward one of them pressed a note into his hand, thanking him for speaking out about the side effects of ECT. "This was one of the *pro*-ECT people," Breggin told me when we spoke recently. "They were up there to tell people that ECT works, and here this person was thanking me for providing a dissenting opinion."

For Breggin, the experience epitomized ECT's ability to reduce patients to docility—to the point where they are willing to praise a treatment they feel has done them harm. In his view, ECT is a purposeful assault on the brain. He has been publicizing this opinion since 1979, when his first book, *Electroshock: Its Brain-Disabling Effects*, was published. Since then Breggin, a psychiatrist by training, has made a career out of attacking psychiatry and its methods. He has written several books arguing against the use of medication to treat mental illness, and he claims to be responsible for quashing the resurgence of lobotomy. His most recent efforts have been directed at establishing a link between antidepressants and the Columbine massacre. When Breggin discusses psychiatry, it is in the brusque manner of an aggressive debater.

Though Breggin has waged many campaigns, he has attacked ECT particularly vehemently, arguing that it causes "severe brain dysfunction" and that it creates in patients profound feelings of apathy or delirium. Psychiatrists welcome either outcome, he told me, because they can note with satisfaction on their charts that the patient is "complaining less" or has "an elevated mood." In this way, he says, psychiatrists fool themselves into believing that they

are helping a patient when they are really doing harm. In his book *Toxic Psychiatry* (1991), Breggin wrote,

If a woman received an accidental shock in her kitchen, perhaps from touching her forehead against a short-circuited refrigerator, and fell to the floor convulsing, she'd be rushed to the local ER and treated as an acute medical emergency. If she awoke the way a shock patient does—dazed, confused, disoriented, and suffering from a headache, stiff neck, and nausea—she'd be hospitalized for careful observation and probably put on anti-convulsants for months to prevent another convulsion. But on a psychiatric ward she'd be told she was doing fine and "not to worry," while the electrical closed-head injury was inflicted again and again.

Breggin first encountered ECT in the 1950s, when, as an undergraduate at Harvard, he volunteered at a state psychiatric hospital. He was horrified, he recalls, at the conditions on the hospital's "back wards." Schizophrenic patients were left mumbling and rocking back and forth, without any human contact. They were led, zombie-like, to be treated with insulin coma or ECT. Breggin believed that if the patients were exposed to a more empathic environment, and one that provided for their basic needs, they would get better, so he persuaded the hospital administration to start a program of "love and care." He contends that plain old kindness worked. Later, as a resident in psychiatry and a teaching fellow at Harvard Medical School, Breggin observed firsthand the trend in psychiatry away from psychotherapy and toward physiological treatment, and he found it very disturbing.

"Mental illness," he says, "is a metaphor. It's not reality. When patients come into my office and say that they're depressed, I don't give them medication. I ask questions: What is their life like? What is their story? Where are they from? How did they get depressed? Why do they *call* it depression? Depression isn't caused by some mythical biochemical imbalance. It's another word for hopelessness."

This is a philosophy that Breggin absorbed from his training under Thomas Szasz, one of the forerunners of the "anti-psychiatry" movement. In the 1960s—along with Erving Goffman, R. D. Laing, and Michel Foucault—Szasz, a refugee from Nazi-era Hungary and a psychiatrist, promoted the view that mental illness is a social construct. Breggin's language is taken straight from his teacher. In the revised edition of his 1961 book *The Myth of Mental Illness*, Szasz wrote, "Mental illness' is a metaphor. Minds can be 'sick' only in the sense that jokes are 'sick' or economies are 'sick.'"

Breggin is scorned by mainstream psychiatrists for his links to Szasz and for his contemptuous attitude toward physiological psychiatry. "Lots of fields have splinter groups," Harold Sackeim says. "Increasingly the dominant perspective in psychiatry is a biochemical one. There are people who, on ideological grounds, feel that this shouldn't be the

case. They think psychotherapy should be the first line of treatment." But, he says, this opinion isn't necessarily benign. "Breggin will argue that a cup of tea, chicken soup, and a lot of hugging will get a psychotically depressed patient well. And he'll kill a lot of patients that way. That's why he doesn't have hospital privileges."

Still, Breggin has hit a nerve. Patients who have had negative experiences with ECT restate his arguments almost verbatim. By demonizing psychiatrists, by "exposing" their claims, Breggin has suggested answers to patients seeking to understand why they continue to suffer.

SCIENTOLOGY VERSUS PSYCHIATRY

If practitioners of ECT tolerate "survivor" groups and disdain dissenting psychiatrists, they actively loathe the Citizens Commission on Human Rights. The inside of the pamphlet I have—one of many published and disseminated by CCHR—is an indication of why. A quick sampling of chapter headings: "Perpetuating Cruelty," "Therapy or Torture?," "The Nazi Heritage" ("electroshock's development ... traces back to a dark alliance between psychiatry and the Nazi concentration camps"), "Apartheid and ECT," "ECT Promotes Breast Cancer," "Shock From Birth to Grave." Bolts of electricity in vivid neon colors provide visual unity here, emanating from the heads of pregnant women, fetuses, piglets. CCHR does not believe in subtlety.

The commission maintains offices in forty states and chapters in thirty other countries. It has used its branches in part to lobby for legislation against ECT. In 1974 it worked to get the California legislature to prohibit ECT for patients under the age of twelve. It has several times been instrumental in introducing legislation in Texas to ban ECT altogether. Although the legislation has failed, Texas is now, owing in large part to CCHR's efforts, the state in which it is the most difficult to get the treatment. Recently CCHR supported a bill in the Italian region of Piedmont which succeeded in banning ECT for children, the elderly, and, in most cases, pregnant women. That CCHR has effectively and perhaps permanently damaged the public image of ECT is one of the few things about which the commission and psychiatrists agree.

CCHR was founded in 1969 by the Church of Scientology, which by now has a fashionable Hollywood aura—John Travolta, Tom Cruise, and Nicole Kidman are all members. Scientology, "an applied religious philosophy," seeks to change the world through a system known as Dianetics, a term made familiar by a series of TV commercials for a book of the same name by the late L. Ron Hubbard, Scientology's founder and a science-fiction writer. Through

Dianetics, Scientologists hope, according to the church's Web site, to create a utopia "without insanity, without criminals and without war, where the able can prosper and honest beings can have rights, and where man is free to rise to greater heights." In CCHR's view, one of the greatest threats to this vision is abuses inherent in psychiatry, which damages the mind instead of soothing the soul. "For more than 115 years, psychiatrists have treated man as an animal," CCHR's Web site states. "They have assaulted, sexually abused, irreversibly damaged, drugged or killed, all under the guise of 'mental healing.'"

CCHR was co-founded by Thomas Szasz, and its members take pains to emphasize this fact. Their connection to "the Church," as they call it, is spoken of less frequently. CCHR is separately incorporated, and although virtually every CCHR member worldwide also happens to be a member of the Church of Scientology, this is by choice, the organization says, not by compulsion. Rather than promote Scientology, CCHR seeks to lay out the evidence of psychiatry's misdeeds through the use of statistics, anecdotes, journal articles, news accounts, and hospital records.

The most voluminous resource for anti-ECT information within CCHR is Jerry Boswell, the director of the commission's Texas branch and the man most responsible for the state's stringent ECT laws. Boswell is patient and even-tempered, and his voice—soft

and deep, with a heavy drawl—conjures the image of a large man in boots and a cowboy hat. At one point in a recent phone conversation with him I mentioned the TV personality Dick Cavett, who has very publicly and very positively spoken about how ECT helped him out of a terrible depression. "With ECT you have to ask the question of how much electricity was used," Boswell said. "Let's say you have Dick Cavett on your couch. Are you going to shock him at three hundred percent above the seizure threshold, or are you going to give him less electricity? You're going to give him less, because he's a public figure."

CCHR continually alleges that ECT uses "too high" a level of electricity. This has been difficult for psychiatrists to counter, because the very concept of "too high" leads immediately into contentious terrain. Dozens of studies have been done to determine how much electricity produces the most-therapeutic seizures. On the basis of these studies some researchers have recommended that ECT devices be equipped to deliver *more* electricity. A 1991 paper by Harold Sackeim, "Are ECT Devices Underpowered?," published in *The Journal of ECT* (then called *Convulsive Therapy*), questioned the ability of contemporary devices to stimulate an ideally therapeutic seizure.

The main obstacle ECT proponents face may be not proving its inherent usefulness but proving that the brain is an organ like any other, capable of breakdown.

Whatever damage CCHR may have done to ECT, the organization has unquestionably improved the gathering of statistics regarding the treatment. The results, however, have not been advantageous to CCHR's cause. Several years ago CCHR lobbied successfully for compulsory reporting of ECT cases in Texas. William Reid, a clinical professor of psychiatry at the University of Texas Health Science Center, in San Antonio, and three other authors recently published in the *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry* all of the center's available data from September of 1993 to April of 1995. The article reported that 97.5 percent of all admissions were wholly voluntary; that the percentage of patients exhibiting "severe" symptoms was reduced from 70.7 prior to ECT to 2.4 afterward; that the percentage of patients with "moderate," "severe," or "extreme" memory dysfunction decreased after ECT; and that no bone fractures, heart attacks, or deaths occurred during treatment. Of the 2,583 patients described by the data, eight died within two weeks of their last treatment, but only two of these deaths may have been related in any way to ECT. The authors write,

We are aware that anti-ECT groups have used the publicly available ... data to support their contentions that ECT is dangerous and unnecessary and to campaign in the Texas legislature to ban the treatment altogether. We believe that those groups have often misinterpreted and/or misused the ... data. We hope that this paper promotes objective discussion among clinicians, patients, families, and those who influence patients' access to this important treatment modality.

KEEPING IT BORING

McLean Hospital has the sprawling lawns and architectural mien of a small New England college. Its forty-two buildings, almost all made of brick, are spread out over 242 acres. Adirondack chairs grace the lawns. Even early in the morning people are strolling about, and it is impossible to tell which are patients and which are staff members.

As at most hospitals, ECT at McLean is administered early on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings—a cycle that allows patients to spend at least two days resting between treatments. In a typical year doctors at McLean give about 2,000 ECT treatments to about 200 patients. The diagnosis for almost all of them is some form of acute depression. Most have experienced what psychiatrists gently call "suicidal ideation." On the April morning that I visited to watch a treatment, Michael Henry, the head of McLean's ECT programs, was scheduled to treat sixteen patients, all of whom fit into those two categories. Henry seems to display all the qualities one hopes for in a psychiatrist. He has soft, comforting features; indomitable patience; and a voice that remains calm even when the situation calls for some emotion.

I arrived at the hospital before 8:00 A.M. and was met in

the reception area by a staff member in the hospital's public-affairs office. (This was the first time that a reporter was to be allowed to watch an ECT procedure at McLean.) A few minutes later I was shown into the treatment room, which looked like a small operating room but was less intimidating. With the middle of the room dominated by the table on which the patient lay, there was little space for the small crowd that had assembled: Henry, the anesthesiologist, a nurse, a third-year medical student, another staff member, and me.

The patient appeared to be in his late fifties, with gray hair and a touch of stubble. He was wearing jeans, a purple long-sleeved shirt, and white tennis shoes. He seemed unalarmed by the treatment that was to come, but his countenance betrayed the anguish of what Henry had told me was a depression whose manifestations included somatic hallucinations—illusions of movement and disease in different parts of the man's body. A year earlier the patient had gone through a course of ECT for similar episodes. That course had shown positive results, but the patient had recently relapsed and opted for more ECT. The treatment he was receiving that morning was his sixth in this course. I later asked Henry how many the man was to have. "That depends on him," he said. "We let the patient decide. We are very reluctant to push ECT."

The treatment began when the anesthesiologist injected a muscle relaxant and a general anesthetic into the patient's arm. The nurse inflated a blood-pressure cuff around his right ankle, which would prevent the relaxant from reaching his right foot and thus would provide a place where Henry could observe muscle contractions. She gently rubbed his hand as he went under. The anesthesiologist fit a plastic mask attached to a turnip-shaped bag over the patient's mouth and proceeded to squeeze oxygen into his lungs. Manually aided respiration has become standard procedure in ECT; it helps the patient not only to breathe once the muscle relaxants have paralyzed his diaphragm but also to rise from the anesthesia with a minimum of discomfort and memory loss.

Henry rubbed conductive jelly on two electrodes and placed both on the left side of the patient's head. Unilateral ECT, as this is called, is now the most common form. For years researchers debated whether this method was less effective than bilateral ECT, which involves placing one electrode on either side of the head, thus causing the seizure to affect both hemispheres of the brain. It has recently become clear that the difference in effectiveness is negligible but that unilateral ECT causes much less serious aftereffects.

Henry walked over to the ECT device, which looks like a large stereo receiver, and pressed a button. The patient's right foot seized, as though experiencing a sudden itch or a slight muscle spasm, and after ten seconds that was it. The procedure was gracefully mundane—anticlimactic, I couldn't help thinking. As we walked out, Henry said, "We try to keep it as



AND THE STORY OF THE MIDDLE AGES

A magnificent five-volume set

Worth \$215.00

Yours for only

\$9.95

including shipping and handling

War, conquest and religious discord are captured in five volumes by world famous historians including Johan Huizinga and Geoffrey Barraclough. *The Story of the Middle Ages* is a voyage of discovery and enlightenment through a thousand years of history. From the fall of Rome, through the Dark Ages to the Crusades and the birth of the Renaissance, *The Story of the Middle Ages* reveals the very essence of the period.

Beautifully illustrated in color, our set is designed and bound in traditional cloth, blocked in 22kt gold and purple and presented in a matching slipcase. Normally \$215.00, it can be yours for just \$9.95 as your introduction to The Folio Society. Also, the *Cambridge Biographical Encyclopedia*, worth \$54.95, is yours FREE – just for replying.

No publisher devotes more attention to book design and production than The Folio Society. Authentic bindings, rare typefaces and illustrations by notable artists combine to make Folio editions unique.

Your choice

The Folio Society does NOT send you unsolicited books or 'choices of the month'. You simply choose four books from our sixty-page catalogue to fulfil your membership.

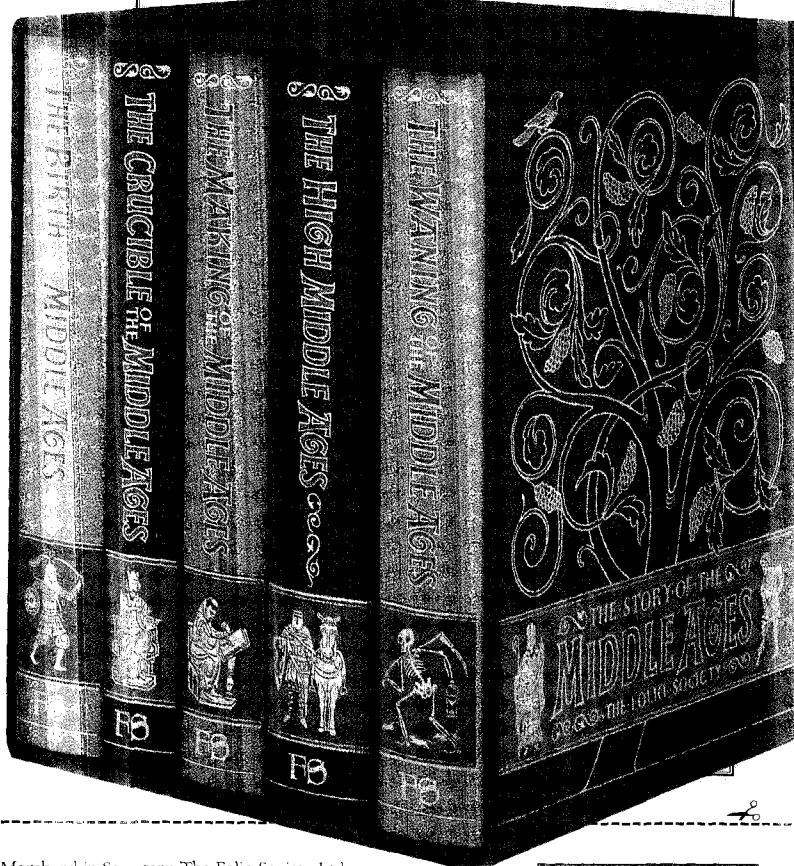
Our current publications include history and eye-witness accounts, short stories and anthologies, biography and autobiography, modern and classic fiction, children's books, humour, poetry, legend and authoritative books on the classical world. With prices starting as low as \$24.50, the majority of books are still less than \$45.00.

We publish our books for dedicated readers who wish to rediscover the pleasures of the fine edition at an affordable price. Why not join us now? Simply fill out and return the coupon today or call Toll-Free (24 hours) 1-800-353-0700 to take advantage of this special introductory offer.



THE FOLIO SOCIETY

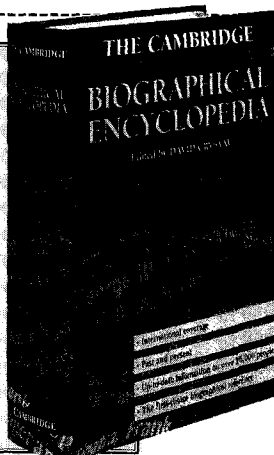
P.O. Box 693, Holmes, PA 19043.



Worth
\$54.95
Yours
FREE

just for replying

- Latest edition
- 1176 pages
- 26,000 entries
- Fully illustrated
- Hardcover edition



To: The Membership Secretary, The Folio Society Ltd.
P.O. Box 693, Holmes, PA 19043.
Fax: 1-610-532-9001.

ORDER TOLL FREE
1-800-353-0700

Please accept my application for FREE trial membership of The Folio Society and send me *The Story of the Middle Ages*, together with the Folio catalogue and my FREE copy of *The Cambridge Biographical Encyclopedia*. If I agree to purchase at least four books from your catalogue I will be billed only \$9.95 for *The Story of the Middle Ages* (including shipping and handling). If I am not satisfied – for any reason – I may return the introductory set within 14 days. My membership will be cancelled, I will owe nothing and I will be under no further obligation. *The Cambridge Biographical Encyclopedia* is mine to keep whatever I decide.

Name _____

Date _____

BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE

Address _____

City _____

State _____

Zipcode _____

PLEASE ALLOW 21 DAYS FOR DELIVERY.

APPLICATION SUBJECT TO APPROVAL

1X23

absolutely boring as possible. The less interesting the better.”

He could have been speaking for nearly all his fellow practitioners of ECT. Henry understands full well that the treatment’s reputation is more complicated. Despite all the improvements in patient care, despite all the subtle tweaks and the impressive monitors affixed to the devices, ECT, Henry says, is still fundamentally the same treatment it was sixty years ago. The theory has remained fixed: shock a patient with enough electricity so that he’ll have a seizure, and he’ll probably get better. It’s a blunt idea, medically speaking, and when pills that silently alter neurochemistry are the frame of reference, it is tough to warm up to something so primitively straightforward—even if for some reason it seems to work.

A number of ECT’s most dedicated practitioners express a distaste for engaging in public efforts to bolster its reputation. One reason they give is that such undertakings would require pressing patients into service as witnesses. “We are here to do good by patients,” Henry told me, “not to create poster children.” In any event, among ECT practitioners there is considerable apprehensiveness about the media. In 1995 *USA Today* ran a three-part story about ECT that began with the death of a seventy-two-year-old woman during treatment; understandably, the article’s publication had serious repercussions for patients’ willingness to undergo ECT. In 1980 *The Atlantic Monthly* ran an article titled “Electroshock: The Unkindest Therapy of All,” which Max Fink likened to *Mein Kampf*.

A skeptical press is symptomatic of a larger phenomenon. Psychiatrists assume that anti-ECT activists represent a fringe viewpoint on mental illness, whereas the evidence suggests that the anti-ECT outlook is actually close to the public’s. In 1999 the Office of the Surgeon General released its first ever report on mental health. The report cited estimates that two thirds of all cases of mental illness in this country go unreported. One of the main reasons the report gave for this is a widespread disbelief in the biological origin of psychiatric disorders. Despite the fact that major depression ranks second only to heart disease in the nation’s “disease burden” (a measure that takes both mortality and morbidity into account), and despite the great scientific leaps that psychiatry has made, the report found the stigma associated with mental illness to be overwhelming: many people do not even accept that mental function is the work of a physical organ—a basic tenet of psychiatry. This suggests that the main obstacle ECT proponents face may be not proving its inherent usefulness but proving that the brain is an organ like any other, capable of breakdown.

When the Surgeon General’s report came out, it included a statement about ECT: “First-line treatment for most people with depression today consists of antidepressant medication, psychotherapy, or the combination ... In situations where these options are not effective or too slow ... electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) may be considered.” This

wasn’t the original wording. Two months earlier a consumer-rights activist had leaked the section dealing with ECT, which had called it a “safe and effective treatment for depression.” A torrent of protests flooded the Surgeon General’s office. CCHR sent a sixteen-page document denouncing what it saw as a categorical endorsement of ECT. Linda Andre held meetings with an administrator working on the report. In the end the statement was softened.

However, the central message of the report—that there exists an enduring, peculiar, and unfortunate double standard involving the “physical” and the “mental” illnesses—was not mitigated. The predominant belief in the United States, the report indicated, is that it is all right to be subject to infection, degeneration, and microscopic revolts from the neck down. But a moral culpability is attached to whatever afflicts our minds. The double standard extends to treatment. We concede that coping with diseases of the body may of necessity bring about painful, even dangerous, side effects. We concede that we must weigh risks and benefits. But with psychiatric treatments, especially ECT, any possibility of harm is deemed wanton and intolerable. The discrepancy in attitudes is a strange one. According to Joseph Coyle, the chairman of the Department of Psychiatry at Harvard University, 15 percent of severely depressed patients commit suicide. It is a lethal disease. ECT doctors often draw a parallel with cancer: the treatments for cancer can be as damaging as the disease itself, they point out, yet there are no anti-chemotherapy lobbyists.

More important than questioning why anti-ECT lobbyists persist is asking what psychiatrists might do to counter the criticism. The answer from some is that they are already doing all they need to do. ECT use seems to be on the rise, even if slowly, and psychiatry’s professional organizations are continually refining treatment guidelines. Greater advocacy efforts seem not to be on anyone’s agenda, perhaps for fear of luring ECT’s detractors into even louder denunciations.

There is still the possibility that a more benign method will be found to produce therapeutic seizures in the brain. Clinical trials are under way at hospitals worldwide for a treatment known as transcranial magnetic stimulation, which in one of its forms uses a strong magnetic field to create a seizure that is much more precise in intensity and placement than an ECT seizure. Convulsive TMS could drastically reduce memory loss, and thus could be an advance in convulsive therapy as marked as the move from Metrazol to electricity, sixty years ago. But it is likely to be years before TMS is fully developed and finds its way into treatment rooms around the country. In the meantime, patients must continue to seek out hospitals that offer ECT. And ECT will continue to offer benefits that other treatments do not.

As for Michael Henry’s patient, he underwent six more treatments and was released, in good condition and well oriented. ▀

TWO LOVE POEMS *by Wislawa Szymborska*

TRANSLATED BY JOANNA TRZECIAK

.....

OPENNESS

Here we are, naked lovers,
beautiful to each other—and that's enough.
The leaves of our eyelids our only covers,
we're lying amidst deep night.

But they know about us, they know,
the four corners, and the chairs nearby us.
Discerning shadows also know,
and even the table keeps quiet.

Our teacups know full well
why the tea is getting cold.
And old Swift can surely tell
that his book's been put on hold.

Even the birds are in the know:
I saw them writing in the sky
brazenly and openly
the very name I call you by.

The trees? Could you explain to me
their unrelenting whispering?
The wind may know, you say to me,
but how is just a mystery.

A moth surprised us through the blinds,
its wings in fuzzy flutter.
Its silent path—see how it winds
in a stubborn holding pattern.

Maybe it sees where our eyes fail
with an insect's inborn sharpness.
I never sensed, nor could you tell
that our hearts were aglow in the darkness.

COMMEMORATION

They made love among the hazel shrubs
beneath the suns of dew,
entangling in their hair
a leafy residue.

Heart of the swallow
have mercy on them.

They knelt down by the lake,
combed out the earth and leaves,
and fish swam to the water's edge
shimmering like stars.

Heart of the swallow
have mercy on them.

The reflections of trees were steaming
off the rippling waves.
O swallow let this memory
forever be engraved.

O swallow, thorn of clouds,
anchor of the air,
Icarus improved,
Assumption in formal wear,

O swallow, the calligrapher,
timeless second hand,
early ornithogothic,
a crossed eye in the sky,

O swallow, pointed silence,
mourning full of joy,
halo over lovers,
have mercy on them.

WALKING TOUR

A journey through a metropolis that, once seen, can never be forgotten

BY IAN FRAZIER

Illustration by Ingo Fast

.....

The city has always been here, its proud inhabitants will tell you. Since before the last great ice sheets departed the European continent, human beings have dwelt on this gentle eminence above the mouth of the Imber River, where the "salubrious exhalations" (Stendhal) of the Pripet Marshes mingle with the cooling winds sweeping from the Alps and the Pyrenees. Some indefinable quality of the surrounding sky, a peculiar vividness of its light, seems to call forth civilization. Primitive tribes stopped here to graze their flocks and build their huts of stone and mammoth ivory; later the legions of Julius Caesar, extending Rome's imperium, fortified the site with walls, towers, and an ingenious aqueduct, parts of which still stand. Century upon century of human endeavor, the soaring cathedrals of the Middle Ages giving way to modern American-style high-rises, created the splendid city spread out before you today.

It's a city one peels back, layer after layer. According to many admirers, not even a lifetime is long enough to experience it all. Naturally, how much of the city a visitor sees depends on how much time he or she can spend. If you choose, you can explore the city by trolleybus, metro, hired car, or (in certain months) guided helicopter tour. Your schedule will of course determine your mode of transportation. For our money, however, the best way to see the city is as its most infatuated visitors always have—slowly, savoringly, with an itinerary of leisurely meandering, and most important, on foot. The routes suggested below may be used by all kinds of travelers; we admit without apology that they favor the pedestrian.

CITY CENTER AND CASTLE ENCLAVE

Begin your tour where the city itself began, in the cobbled square (Fontanka Ploschad) surrounding the fountain of Neptune, original site of the artesian well that supplied the defenders during the siege of the city by Alaric and his Visigoths in A.D. 401. The multi-figured composition of dolphins, sea nymphs, hippocampi, and tritons is a signature of the famous fountain designer Bartolomeo Torrelli, whose mother was the mistress of Charlemagne. Keeping the fountain on your left, proceed to the eastern entry of the

castle at the gate to the outer rampart (admission 250 groschen, credit and debit cards accepted). This is the former periphery of the ancient city, whose massive stone structures served in later years as a prison and a meeting place of the first Constituent Assembly. Parts of the castle were heavily damaged during World War II and are permanently closed.

A museum in the former throne chamber houses a collection of church and state treasures, including diadems, scepters, reliquaries, and flails. The miter worn by Saint Vitus at his ordination is in a case at the center of the hall. Beyond the museum is a grassy courtyard cluttered with statuary of many periods, and farther still is a walkway always bustling with tourists and local people coming and going from the many points of departure at the city's core. Here self-employed craftsmen, buskers, and berry sellers compete for the busy trade. Here also you may encounter a cheerful young woman in a bright-green T-shirt and baseball cap passing out free boxes of Tic Tac candies, small oval mint-flavored capsules made in North America. Competing for the candy market dominated by Life Savers, a venerable American brand, Tic Tac has frequently promot-



ed itself during the past thirty years with vigorous advertising campaigns involving similar free-sample giveaways.

The Cathedral of Saint Martha-Sophia, looming above the metro station opposite, honors the city's patron and protector, believed to have saved some of the population during the plagues of 1576, 1598, and 1611. The cathedral's fire-gilded dome was carted off in sections by invading Swedes under Charles XII, but was later returned. An allegorical mosaic of the saint rescuing a sinner from a runaway horse representing lust enlivens the ceiling of the narthex. Elaborate inner doors of Renaissance gold filigree lead to the cathedral's cavernous nave, once the largest in the world, whose roof of high groined arches is supported by sixty-four columns of native marble. Imagine, if you will, the thousands of patient workmen who sawed these columns from living rock using the crude tools of that time. Small pieces of this same marble, ideal for paperweights and memo holders, may be purchased at the gift shop by the cathedral's side door.

The gift shop, in its nondescript kiosk of obviously recent construction, also sells postcards of the cathedral, small fringed flags bearing the city's coat of arms, commemorative snow globes, and other items. To divert the shop's young attendant, a radio in the kiosk is constantly playing popular music such as "The Shoop Shoop Song (It's in His Kiss)," by Cher. Cher, a late-twentieth-century American singer and actress, had her first popular hit with her singing partner and then-husband, Sonny Bono, in 1965. Their plangent ballad of young love, "I Got You Babe," gained them wide recognition and, briefly, a network television show of their own. After the TV show they divorced. Cher married one or two other rock stars, while Sonny Bono ran for and was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives as a Republican from the state of California, only to die in a skiing accident some years later. Cher is best known for her

long, straight black hair, her penchant for baring her midriff, and the alluring charm of her navel. "The Shoop Shoop Song (It's in His Kiss)" dates from later in her career, c. 1991. (It was, of course, a remake of a much earlier hit by the R & B singer Betty Everett.) As you listen, turn again to the cathedral dome, which, thanks to an inspired placement of slate-gray shingles on the pitched roof just below it, often seems to float fantastically unmoored in the pewter-colored sky.

BUSINESS DISTRICT AND MARKET ROW

Hard by the city's center is a busy commercial neighborhood extending for a mile or more along William Tell Prospekt. In the eighteenth century this area was called Englishtown (Anglischeberg), after the many merchants of that nationality who came here to buy furs and hemp. The disastrous Revised Economic Directive of the 1930s bulldozed every third building and replaced them all with blocks of solid cement, which have proved troublesome to remove. Though visitors in the recent past have complained of a lack of quality merchandise and a poor selection of colors and styles, you'll find the shopping situation better now.

Wear comfortable shoes, take your time, and don't be afraid to bargain. At the motley open-air stalls (*isby*) that line the curb, prices are so low that you'll have a hard time keeping a straight face as you do. That's part of the fun. Farther on, crowds thin out as you enter an area of expensive shops that have taken over what once were grand city houses for the aristocracy. A riot of Neo-Baroque terra-cotta bas-reliefs depicting scenes from the hunt adorn the front of No. 128, where the fabulously wealthy Von Hoffman family used to hold their glittering parties; now it houses an Italian clothing concern. Note the twin Atlases, beautifully restored, that support on their broad shoulders the frieze of acanthus leaves over the door to the cell-phone outlet across the



the garment and thus were dubbed “fruit loops,” the implied reference to a street word for homosexual combining with a pun on the recently introduced cereal brand.

Among adolescent boys in the American Midwest in schools somewhat akin to the local *gymnasia*, a sort of game developed in which the object was to sneak up behind one's companion and, with a quick motion, rip the "fruit loop" from the back of his shirt. For the author of these words, nothing evokes the near-frenzied school days of adolescence more vividly than the recollection of snatching at someone's "fruit loop" in a crowded hallway between classes, or of having one's own suddenly and unexpectedly torn off.

Naturally, illegal activity soon followed. In a small-town high school in the Great Lakes region of Ohio, in the spring of 1964, a boy by the name of Jim Robey, while attempting to snatch the “fruit loop” of a boy named Randy Case, happened to tear the other boy’s shirt virtually in half from top to bottom. A full-scale fistfight broke out in which most of the eighth-grade boys ended up taking part; the school administration became involved, parents were called in, criminal charges were almost filed, replacement of the shirt was demanded, and bitter resentments lasted even after the Cases had moved to Illinois.

Thankfully, the chances of this happening to you are small. Nowadays, in the widespread euphoria over the rise of free-market economics, the terrors of high school in the past century seem very far away, with good reason. If, however, you are one of those travelers visiting the city as part of a high school tour group, it pays to exercise all the caution you would at home.

This lovely wide avenue lined with linden trees, the city's favorite promenade for seeing and being seen, was not originally named for the American professional football star.



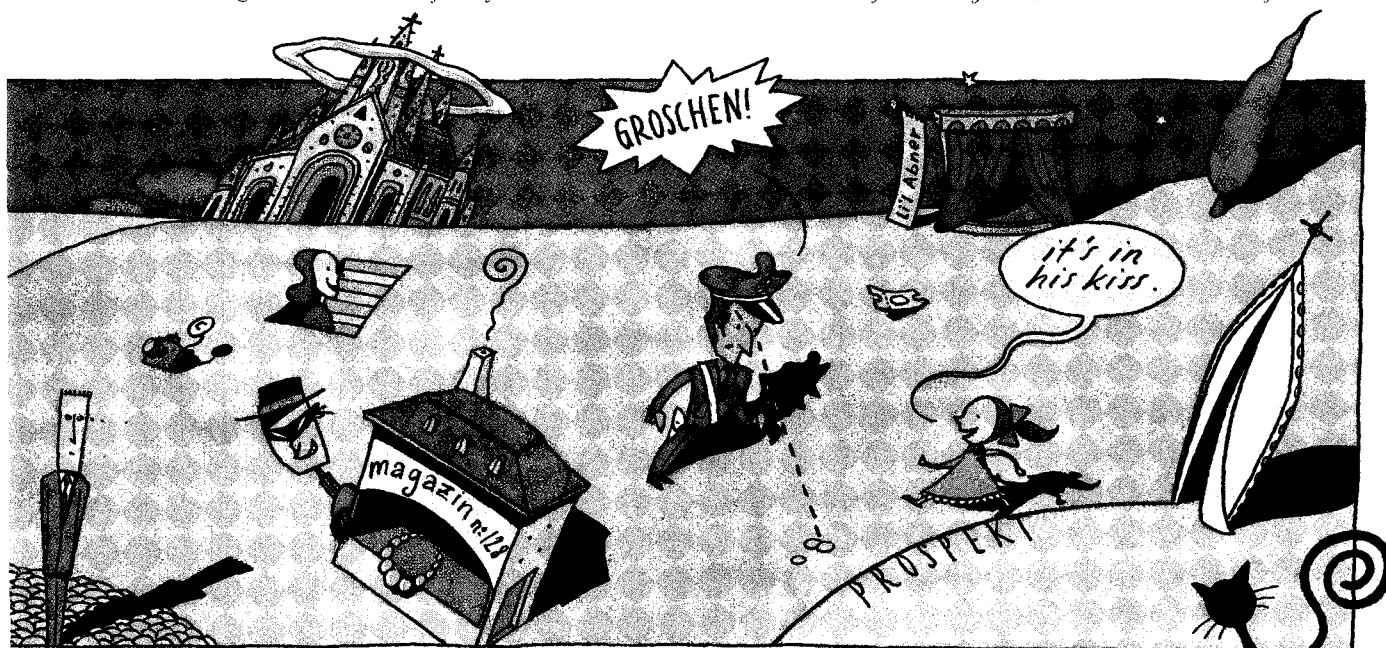
Someone or other who was King during the Hundred Years' War apparently named it after his son or close friend who was killed in 1346 at the Battle of Crécy. Laid out to form one of the arms of a commemorative Maltese cross (the other three arms were never completed), the avenue quickly attracted the city's most fashionable society and became the scene of many historic events. Pope Anatoly I, "the traveling Pope," pitched his papal tent along its upper reaches in 1495; some years later Martin Luther, in an act of defiance, held an eel-pulling on the very spot where the Pope had lain. More recently Joe Namath, whose victory over the heavily favored Baltimore Colts (which he himself predicted) in Super Bowl III will never be forgotten, was also here. Enormous banners advertising Namath's appearance in a touring production of *Li'l Abner* at the Mariinsky Theater stretched high above the street from one side to the other, causing some visitors and tour guides, for convenience' sake, to refer to the boulevard by his name. So cleverly is the city designed that no matter where one sets out from or which direction one follows, one seems always to end up back on this glorious boulevard.

It is here and in similar places, not in airport shuttle buses or in the duty-free shop at the airport, that the true life of the city goes on. Here young couples walk arm in arm in the evening, enjoying each other and the cosmopolitan crowd—priceless entertainment that even the poorest can afford. On the narrow streets feeding into the boulevard, and in its basement cafés, and even on the pedestals of the Art Nouveau sylphs of the apartment façades, the city's inhabitants gather at day's end to socialize. Some are dressed in the height of fashion; some do not yet know the dangers of mixing stripes and plaids. All are savoring this brief respite in their lives, and their faces alone tell a story more eloquent than any book. A few, indeed, are wearing the distinctive green-and-white jersey of the New York

Jets with the number 12, the number Namath always wore. These jerseys, given out perhaps for nothing or at cost to promote the show at the Mariinsky, can provide a lively opportunity for impromptu conversation. Disregarding your lack of knowledge of the language, you might mention to the jersey wearer the outline of Namath's life: how he grew up in the gritty steel town of Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania; how he played college football at Alabama under the great coach Bear Bryant; and how he went on to New York City and the Jets and became "Broadway Joe," etc. Accompanied by appropriate gestures, a few simple phrases can convey a lot.

And above it all the serene, overarching sky, so limpid and infused with light, continues to offer inspiration as it did to poets and painters of old. In its depths you can perhaps see the spires of the ideal city of which the real one surrounding you is merely a magnificent approximation. The towering clouds, like the ones in that Virgin Airways ad, draw the eye ever upward above the rooftops into higher, brighter realms. There is, quite simply, no other city like this in the world. Of course you will come back, perhaps as early as next year, depending on the fares. And if, by some misfortune, you see the city only once, yet you will always keep it with you in memories and photographs. The great Goethe once made a very famous remark about the city. It may be found in almost every book of well-known quotations, cross-referenced under his name. And yet, we feel, even Goethe himself, for all his talent, failed to capture the spirit at the city's heart. It eluded him, as it always, finally, eludes us all. Shimmering beyond the reach of those who seek it, the timeless city remains unknown and uncaptured, waiting for new eyes to discover it with the dawn of every reasonably priced vacation day. ▀

ON THE WEB: For more Atlantic articles by Ian Frazier, and an Atlantic Unbound interview from January, 2000, see www.theatlantic.com/ianfrazier.



SISTER GODZILLA

A Short Story

BY LOUISE ERDRICH

Illustration by Zohar Lazar

.....

The door banged shut, and then the children were alone with their sixth-grade teacher. It was the first day of school, in the fall of 1963. The habits of Franciscan nuns still shrouded all but their faces, so each of the new nun's features was emphasized, read forty times over in astonishment. Outlined in a stiff white frame of starched linen, Sister's eyes, nose, and mouth leaped out, a mask from a dream, a great rawboned jackal's muzzle.

"Oh, Christ," Toddy Crieder said, just loud enough for Dot to hear.

Dot Adare, a troublemaker, knew Toddy was in love with her and usually ignored him, but the nun's extreme ugliness was irresistible.

"Godzilla," she whispered.

The teacher's name was Sister Mary Anita Groff. She was young, in her twenties or thirties, and so swift of movement, for all her hulking size, that walking from the back of the room to the front, she surprised her students, made them picture an athlete's legs and muscles concealed in the flow of black wool. When she swept the air in a gesture meant to include them all in her opening remarks, her hands fixed their gazes. They were the opposite of her face. Her hands were beautiful, as white as milk glass, the fingers straight and tapered. They were the hands in the hallway print of Mary underneath the cross. They were the hands of the Apostles, cast in plastic and lit at night on the tops of television sets. Praying hands.

Ballplayer's hands. She surprised them further by walking onto the graveled yard at recess, her neckpiece cutting hard into the flesh beneath her heavy jaw. When, with a matter-of-fact grace, she pulled from the sleeve of her gown a mitt of dark mustard-colored leather and raised it, a thrown softball dropped in. Her skill was obvious. Good players rarely stretch or change their expressions. They simply tip their hands toward the ball like magnets, and there it is. As a pitcher, Mary Anita was a swirl of wool, as graceful as the windblown cape of Zorro, an emotional figure that stirred Dot so thoroughly that as she pounded home plate—a rubber dish mat—and beat the air twice in practice swings, choked up on the handle, tried to concentrate, Dot knew she would have no choice but to slam a home run.

She did not. In fact, she whiffed, in three strikes, never ticking the ball or fouling. Purely disgusted with herself, she sat on the edge of the bike rack and watched as Sister gave a few balls away and pitched easy hits to the rest of the team. It was as if the two had sensed from the beginning what was to come. Or, then again, perhaps Mary Anita's information came from Dot's former teachers, living in the red-brick convent across the road. Hard to handle. A smart-off. Watch out when you turn your back. They were right. After recess, her pride burned, Dot sat at her desk and drew a dinosaur draped in a nun's robe, its mouth open in a roar. The teeth, long and jagged, grayish-white, held her attention. She worked so hard on the picture that she barely noticed as the room hushed around her. She felt the presence, though, the shadow of attention that dropped over her as Mary Anita stood watching. As a mark of her arrogance, Dot kept drawing.

She shaded in the last tooth and leaned back to frown at her work. The page was plucked into the air before she could pretend to cover it. No one made a sound. Dot's heart beat with excitement.

"You will remain after school," the nun pronounced.

The last half hour passed. The others filed out the door. And then the desk in front of Dot filled suddenly. There was the paper, the carefully rendered dinosaur caught in mid-roar. Dot stared at it furiously, her mind a blur of anticipation. She was not afraid.

"Look at me," Mary Anita said.

Dot found that she didn't want to, that she couldn't. Then her throat filled. Her face was on fire. Her lids hung across her eyeballs like lead shades. She traced the initials carved into her desktop.

"Look at me," Mary Anita said to her again, and Dot's gaze was drawn upward, upward on a string, until she met the eyes of her teacher, deep brown, electrically sad. Their very stillness shook Dot.

"I'm sorry," she said.

When those two unprecedented words dropped from her lips, Dot knew, beyond reason and past bearing, that something terrible had occurred. She felt dizzy. The blood rushed to her head so fast that her ears ached, yet the tips

of her fingers fell asleep. Her eyelids prickled and her nose wept, but at the same time her mouth went dry. Her body was a thing of extremes, contradicting itself.

"When I was young," Sister Mary Anita said, "as young as you are, I felt a great deal of pain when I was teased about my looks. I've long since accepted my ... deformity. A prognathic jaw runs in our family, and I share it with an uncle. But I must admit, the occasional insult, or a drawing such as yours, still hurts."

Dot began to mumble and then stopped, desperate. Sister Mary Anita waited, and then handed her her own handkerchief.

"I'm sorry," Dot said again. She wiped her nose. The square of white material was cool and fresh. "Can I go now?"

"Of course not," Mary Anita said.

Dot was confounded. The magical two words, an apology, had dropped from her lips. Yet more was expected. What?

"I want you to understand something," the nun said. "I've told you how I feel. And I expect that you will never hurt me again."

The nun waited, and waited, until their eyes met. Then Dot's mouth fell wide. Her eyes spilled over. She knew that the strange feelings that had come upon her were the same feelings that Mary Anita had felt. Dot had never felt another person's feelings, never in her life.

"I won't do anything to hurt you," she blubbered passionately. "I'll kill myself first."

"I'm sure that will not be necessary," Sister Mary Anita said.

Dot tried to rescue her pride then, by turning away very quickly. Without permission, she ran out the schoolroom door, down the steps, and on into the street, where at last the magnetic force of the encounter weakened, and suddenly she could breathe. Even that was different, though. As she walked, she began to realize that her body was still fighting itself. Her lungs filled with air like two bags, but every time they did so, a place underneath them squeezed so painfully that the truth suddenly came clear.

"I love her now," she blurted out. She stopped on a crack, stepping on it, sickened. "Oh, God, I am *in love*."

Toddy Crieder was a hollow-chested, envious boy whose reputation had never recovered from the time he was sent home for eating tree bark. In the third grade he had put two crayons up his nose, pretend tusks. The pink one got stuck, and Toddy had to visit the clinic. This year, already, his stomach had been pumped in



the emergency room. Dot despised him, but that only seemed to fuel his adoration of her.

Coming into the schoolyard the second day, a bright, cool morning, Toddy ran up to Dot, his thin legs knocking.

"Yeah," he cried. "Godzilla! Not bad, Adare."

He wheeled off, the laces of his tennis shoes dragging. Dot looked after him and felt the buzz inside her head begin. How she wanted to stuff that name back into her mouth, or at least Toddy's mouth.

"I hope you trip and murder yourself!" Dot screamed.

But Toddy did not trip. For all of his clumsiness, he managed to stay upright, and as Dot stood rooted in the center of the walk, she saw him whiz from clump to clump of children, laughing and gesturing, filling the air with small and derisive sounds. Sister Mary Anita swept out the door, a wooden-handled brass bell in her hand, and when she shook it up and down, the children, who played together in twos and threes, swung toward her and narrowed or widened their eyes and turned eagerly to one another. Some began to laugh. It seemed to Dot that all of them did, in fact, and that the sound, jerked from their lips, was large, uncanny, totally and horribly delicious.

"Godzilla, Godzilla," they called under their breath. "Sister Godzilla."

Before them on the steps, the nun continued to smile into their faces. She did not hear them—yet. But Dot knew she would. Over the bell her eyes were brilliantly dark and alive. Her horrid jagged teeth showed in a smile when she saw Dot, and Dot ran to her, thrusting a hand into her lunch bag and grabbing the cookies that her mother had made from whatever she could find around the house—raisins, congealed Malt-O-Meal, the whites of eggs.

“Here!” Dot shoved a sweet, lumpy cookie into the nun’s hand. It fell apart, distracting Sister as the children pushed past.

The students seemed to forget the name off and on all week. Some days they would move on to new triumphs or disasters—other teachers occupied them, or some small event occurred in the classroom. But then Toddy Crieder would lope and careen among them at recess, would pump his arms and pretend to roar behind Sister Mary Anita’s back as she stepped up to the plate. As she swung and connected with the ball and gathered herself to run, her veil lifting, the muscles in her shoulders like the curved hump of a raptor’s wings, Toddy would move along behind her, rolling his legs the way Godzilla did in the movie. In her excitement, dashing base to base, her feet long and limber in black laced shoes, Mary Anita did not notice. But Dot looked on, the taste of a penny caught in her throat.

“Snakes live in holes. Snakes are reptiles. These are Science Facts.” Dot read aloud to the class from her Discovery science book. “Snakes are not wet. Some snakes lay eggs. Some have live young.”

“Very good,” Sister said. “Can you name other reptiles?”

Dot’s tongue fused to the back of her throat.

“No,” she croaked.

“Anyone else?” Sister asked.

Toddy Crieder raised his hand. Sister recognized him.

“How about Godzilla?”

Casps. Small noises of excitement. Mouths agape. Admiration for Toddy’s nerve rippled through the rows of children like a wind across a field. Sister Mary Anita’s great jaw opened, opened, and then snapped shut. Her shoulders shook. No one knew what to do at first. Then she laughed. It was a high-pitched, almost birdlike sound, a thin laugh like the highest notes on the piano. The children all hesitated, and then they laughed with her, even Toddy Crieder. Eyes darting from one child to the next, to Dot, Toddy laughed.

Dot’s eyes crossed with urgency. When Sister Mary Anita turned to new work, Dot crooked her arm beside her like a piston and leaned across Toddy’s desk.

“I’m going to give you one right in the breadbasket,” she said.

With a precise boxer’s jab she knocked the wind out of Toddy, left him gasping, and turned to the front, face clear, as Sister began to speak.

Furious sunlight. Black cloth. Dot sat on the iron trapeze, the bar pushing a sore line into the backs of her legs. As she swung, she watched Sister Mary Anita. The wind was harsh, and the nun wore a pair of wonderful gloves, black, the fingers cut off of them so that her hands could better grip the bat. The ball arced toward her sinuously and dropped. Her bat caught it with a thick, clean sound, and off it soared. Mary Anita’s habit swirled open behind her. The cold bit her cheeks red. She swung to third, glanced, panting, over her shoulder, and then sped home. She touched down lightly and bounded off.

Dot’s arms felt heavy, weak, and she dropped from the trapeze and went to lean against the brick wall of the school building. Her heart thumped in her ears. She saw what she would do when she grew up: declare her vocation, enter the convent. She and Sister Mary Anita would live in the nuns’ house together, side by side. They would eat, work, eat, cook. To relax, Sister Mary Anita would hit pop flies and Dot would catch them.

Someday, one day, Dot and Mary Anita would be walking, their hands in their sleeves, long habits flowing behind.

“Dear Sister,” Dot would say, “remember that old nickname you had the year you taught the sixth grade?”

“Why, no,” Sister Mary Anita would say, smiling at her. “Why, no.”

And Dot would know that she had protected her, kept her from harm.

It got worse. Dot wrote some letters, tore them up. Her hand shook when Sister passed her in the aisle, and her eyes closed, automatically, as she breathed in the air that closed behind the nun. Soap—a harsh soap. Faint car-bolic mothballs. That’s what she smelled like. Dizzying. Dot’s fists clenched. She pressed her knuckles to her eyes and very loudly excused herself. She went to the girls’ bathroom and stood in a stall. Her life was terrible. The thing was, she didn’t want to be a nun.

“I don’t want to,” she whispered, desperate, to the white-washed tin walls that shuddered if a girl bumped them. “There must be another way.”

She would have to persuade Mary Anita to forsake her vows, to come and live with Dot and her mother in the house just past the edge of town. How would she start, how would she persuade her teacher?

Someone was standing outside the stall. Dot opened the door a bit and stared into the great craggy face.

“Are you feeling all right? Do you need to go home?” Sister Mary Anita was concerned.

Fire shot through Dot’s limbs. The girls’ bathroom, a place of secrets, of frosted glass, its light mute and yet brilliant, paralyzed her. But she gathered herself. Here was her chance, as if God had given it to her.

“Please,” Dot said, “let’s run away together!”

Sister paused. “Are you having troubles at home?”

"No," Dot said.

Sister's milk-white hand came through the doorway and covered Dot's forehead. Dot's anxious thoughts throbbed against the lean palm. Staring into the eyes of the nun, Dot gripped the small metal knob on the inside of the door and pushed. Then she felt herself falling forward, slowly turning like a leaf in the wind, upheld and buoyant in the peaceful roar. It was as though she would never reach Sister's arms, but when she did, she came back with a jolt.

"You *are* ill," Sister said. "Come to the office, and we'll call your mother."

As Dot had known it would, perhaps from that moment in the girls' bathroom, the day came. The day of her reckoning.

Outside, in the morning schoolyard, after mass and before first bell, everyone crowded around Toddy Crieder. In his arms he held a wind-up tin Godzilla, a big toy, almost knee-high, a green-and-gold replica painted with a fierce eye for detail. The scales were perfect overlapping crescents, and the eyes were large and manic, pitch-black, oddly human. Toddy had pinned a sort of cloak on the thing, a black scarf. Dot's arms thrust through the packed shoulders, but the bell rang, and Toddy stowed the toy under his coat. His eyes picked Dot from the rest.

"I had to send for this!" he cried. The punch hadn't turned him against Dot, only hardened his resolve to please her. He vanished through the heavy wine-red doors of the school. Dot stared at the ground. The world went stark, the colors harsh in her eyes. The small brown pebbles of the playground leaped off the tarred and sealed earth. She took a step. The stones seemed to crack and whistle under her feet.

"Last bell!" Sister Mary Anita called. "You'll be late!"

Morning prayer. The pledge. Toddy drew out the suspense of his audience, enjoying the glances and whispers. The toy was in his desk. Every so often he lifted the lid and then looked around to see how many children were watching him duck inside to make adjustments. By the time Sister started the daily reading lesson, the tension in the room was so acute that not even Toddy could bear it any longer.

The room was large, high-ceilinged, floored with slats of polished wood. Round lights hung on thick chains, and the great rectangular windows let through enormous sheaves of radiance. This large class had been in the room for more than two years. Dot had spent most of every day in the room. She knew its creaks, the muted clunk of desks rocking out of floor bolts, the mad thumping in the radiators like the sound of a thousand imprisoned elves, and so she heard and immediately registered the click and grind of Toddy's wind-up key. Sister Mary Anita did not. The teacher turned to the chalkboard, her book open on the desk, and began to write instructions for the children to copy.

She was absorbed, calling out the instructions as she wrote. Her arm swept up and down, it seemed to Dot, in a frighteningly innocent joy. She was inventing a lesson, some way of doing things, not a word of which was being taken in. All eyes were on the third row, where Toddy Crieder sat. All eyes were on his hand as he wound the toy up to its limit and bent over and set it on the floor. Then the eyes were on the toy itself, as Toddy lifted his hand away and the thing moved forward on its own.

The scarf it wore did not hamper the beast's progress, the regular thrash of its legs. The tiny claw hands beat forward like pistons and the thick metal tail whipped from side to side as the toy moved down the center of the aisle toward the front of the room, toward Sister Mary Anita, who stood, back turned, immersed in her work at the board.

Dot had gotten herself placed in the first row, to be closer to her teacher, and so she saw the creature up close just before it headed into the polished open space of floor at the front of the room. Its powerful jaws thrust from the black scarf; its great teeth were frozen, exhibited in a terrible smile. Its painted eyes had an eager and purposeful look.

Its movement faltered as it neared Mary Anita. The children caught their breath, but the thing inched forward, made slow and fascinating progress, directly toward the hem of her garment. She did not seem to notice. She continued to talk, to write, circling numbers and emphasizing certain words with careful underlines. And as she did so, as the moment neared, Dot's brain finally rang. She jumped as though it were the last bell of the day. She vaulted from her desk. Two steps took her across that gleaming space of wood at the front of the room. But just as she bent down to scoop the toy to her chest, a neat black boot slashed, inches from her nose. Sister Mary Anita had whirled, the chalk fixed in her hand. Daintily, casually, she had lifted her habit and kicked the toy dinosaur into the air. The thing ascended, pedaling its clawed feet, the scarf blown back like a sprung umbrella. The trajectory was straight and true. The toy knocked headfirst into the ceiling and came back down in pieces. The children ducked beneath the rain of scattered tin. Only Dot and Mary Anita stood poised, unmoving, focused on the moment between them.

Dot could look nowhere but at her teacher. But when she lifted her eyes this time, Sister Mary Anita was not looking at her. She had turned her face away, the rough cheek blotched as if it had borne a slap, the gaze hooded and set low. Sister walked to the window, her back again to Dot, to the class, and as the laughter started, uncomfortable and groaning at first, then shriller, fuller, becoming its own animal, Dot felt an unrecoverable tenderness boil up in her. Inwardly she begged the nun to turn and stop the noise. But Sister did not. She let it wash across them both without mercy. Dot lost sight of her unspeakable profile as Mary Anita looked out into the yard. Bathed in brilliant light, the nun's face went as blank as a sheet of paper, as the sky, as featureless as all things that enter heaven. ▀

PURSUIITS & RETREATS

TRAVEL

LAS VEGAS, 'TIS OF THEE

*This sweet land of liberties deserves our respect—
or at least our ambivalence*

BY RICHARD TODD

.....

In certain sectors of our society—including the sector where I hang out—somebody planning a trip to Las Vegas is apt to sound rather apologetic. “Well, actually I’m on my way to California ... going to stop off for a couple of days ... I hear they’ve built some interesting stuff ...” Murmuring just such face-saving disclaimers, I recently did “stop off” in Las Vegas.

I hadn’t been there for a while. Returning to a place is one of the little pleasures of travel: you perceive it differently over the years, and it reminds you of who you once were, and often enough the whole experience spills over into a thoroughly pleasant melancholy. No danger of this emotional sloppiness in Las Vegas. My last trip happened ten years ago, and the city I visited then no longer exists. Not that a decade is the relevant interval: the past four years have seen the arrival of those hotels, Bellagio, Paris, New York–New York, The Venetian, without which Las Vegas would not be ... well, whatever it is. Here is one virtue of Las Vegas: it changes so fast that it makes you feel more or less eternal.

I was staying at Luxor, built in 1993—the world’s third largest hotel. This is not quite the distinction it might seem, inasmuch as nine of the hotels on the world’s top-ten list can be found along the Strip. Luxor is hard to miss: it’s the black-glass pyramid with the 120-foot obelisk and the ten-story sphinx in front. At night a bright beam shines forth from the hotel’s peak, in imitation, I guess, of the eye in the pyramid on a

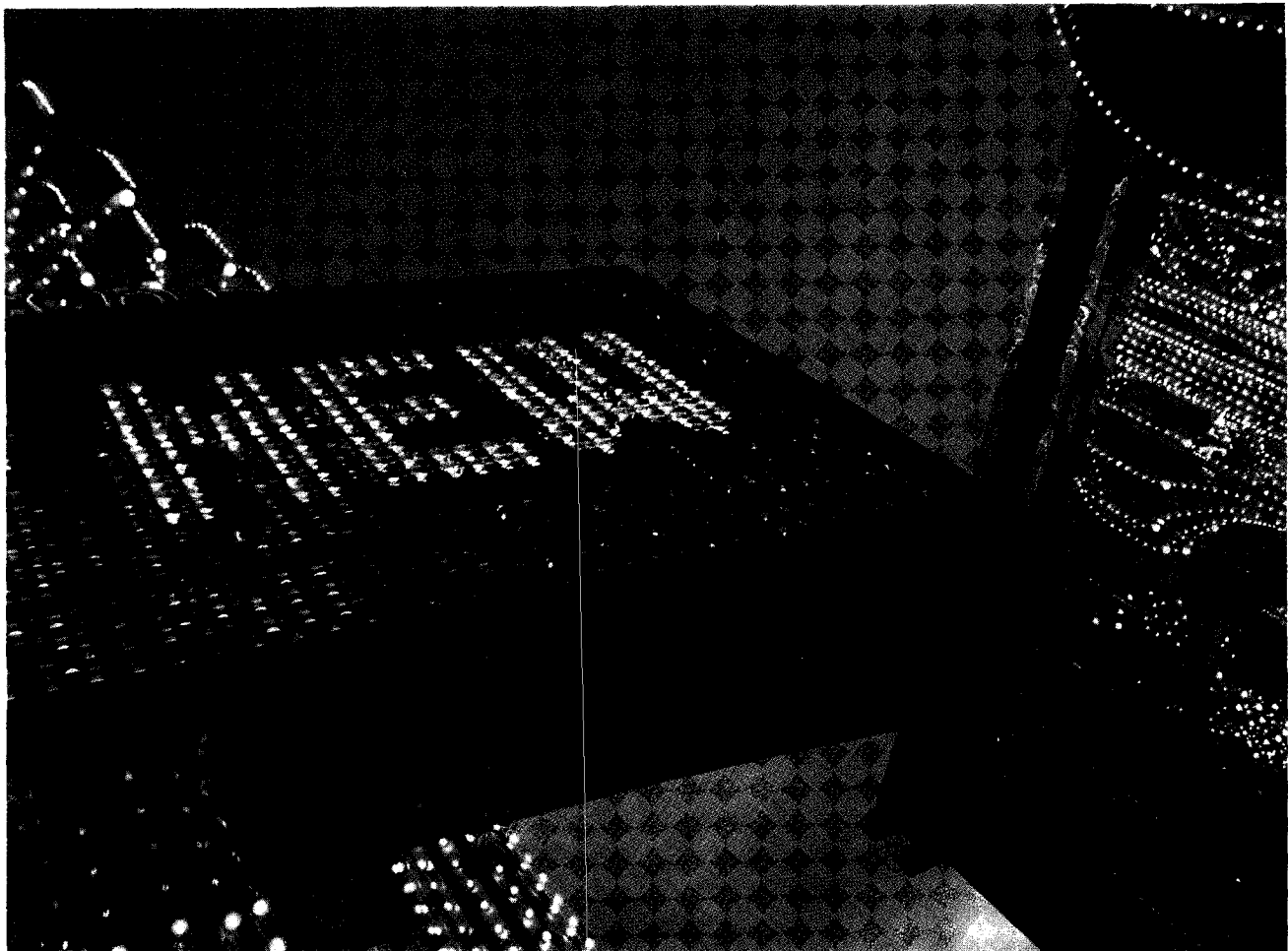
dollar bill. Within is the world’s largest atrium, providing views from the upper stories that are not for the vertiginous. At eight years old Luxor shows signs of wear—and why not, since at any given moment 6,000 or 7,000 people may be staying there? The casino occupies most of the pyramid’s base. When I arrived, its middle-of-the-night cacophony was at full tilt, and I was disheartened to learn that I had a room on the first floor. But it was the first floor of a distant wing, and the room was spacious and surprisingly quiet. In any case, the price would have made it hard to complain: a midweek rate of \$69 a night. Outside my window a garden of immense columns loomed, an evocation of Egyptian ruins.

In the morning I set out on foot to tour the Strip, though Las Vegas doesn’t exactly beckon to the pedestrian. (Later, when I had turned to taxis, one driver remarked that thirty-seven “jaywalkers” had been killed in the city the previous year.) But the walking tour had its rewards, letting me meet the succession of new spectacles slowly, face to face, in all their majesty. Walking north from Luxor, I passed up Excalibur, built on a Knights of the Round Table theme, to get directly to New York–New York, its half-scale Statue of Liberty rising from a rendition of New York Harbor that includes a tugboat and a fireboat and a skyline: the Chrysler Building, the Empire State Building, and CBS’s Black Rock. Around the corner a bit of the Brooklyn Bridge ornaments the street-side façade.

Architectural collage has emerged as the characteristic gesture of the new wave of Las Vegas building. Bellagio has created an eight-acre lake for its entrance, meant to suggest Lake Como. Paris, across the street, features a Louvre-like façade merged with that of the Palais Garnier, the whole thing surmounted by an Eiffel Tower whose hind legs actually rest indoors, in the middle of the casino. An Arc de Triomphe (at two thirds the size of the original) dominates the hotel’s courtyard. The Eiffel Tower stands only half as tall as the real thing, but like the half-scale Statue of Liberty, it is no small structure. The whole of the Paris casino, with bistros and kiosks, lies beneath a false sky intended to simulate a Parisian twilight.

As I soon discovered, down the Strip at The Venetian, the twilight sky provides another leitmotif in Las Vegas architecture these days. The Venetian, which has taken verisimilitude to new ecstasies of detail with the faux-Baroque columns and “faithful reproductions” of works by Titian and Veronese in its lobby, has also constructed on its shopping mezzanine a stretch of the Grand Canal. Gondoliers ply their trade between stores. Here, too, the light tells you it’s about nine o’clock on a late-spring evening. (I’m actually a twilight fancier, but I found this light strangely depressing, no doubt because it doesn’t change. With twilight, as with the rest of life, we only think we want time to stand still.)

This exuberance of fakery has its detractors, who tend to take a moral stance toward it. The criticism one hears most frequently is that it substitutes a “sanitized” experience for the real thing, offering the romance of Venice without the crowds and the stench and the language barrier. I har-



bor suspicions about those who advance this theory—mostly because it seems to give them so much pleasure. True, there have been days in New York when my appetite for that city could have been satisfied exactly by New York—New York, but it's hard to imagine that people think they're having a New York or a Venetian or a Parisian experience in Las Vegas. We like this architecture, if we do, for its ingenuity, not its realism. We're gratified that someone has gone to such lengths to entertain us: it's performance architecture.

And indeed, compared with most buildings, these will prove as fleeting as a song. Let someone have an idea for an even grander hoax, or let the occupancy rate fall below 90 percent, and down they will come. The famous Dunes fell so that Bellagio could rise; The Desert Inn is closed and will soon be razed to make way for something vaster and more glorious. I hate to say this, because The Venetian is so new,

but even now I hear time's winged chariot over the Grand Canal.

As the Strip in all its impermanence has flourished, Las Vegas's old downtown has languished—it's the paradigm, after all, for what has happened in a city near you. And, as usual, efforts at revival—in this case an arcaded street—only make the place look more forlorn. But downtown has its pleasures. For one thing, it's a good place to go to gamble, particularly if you just want to get your feet wet: betting minimums are lower than in the big casinos; the players include some local types; the dealers, less scrutinized by cameras, feel free to reveal their consummate boredom; you see more real drinks; and in general the atmosphere achieves a high sleaziness congruent with what you're doing. I spent an enjoyable hour at a storefront casino one afternoon, betting at the two-dollar craps table. I stood next to a fellow with a glass of whiskey in his hand who was playing an aggres-

sive game but took time to share his strategy with me: "Always bet on the come, always take the odds." This leaves you with chips spread out across the table and a chance at multiple payoffs if the table gets hot—if you "get a shooter." I followed his path for a while, and maybe stayed in the game longer as a consequence. "Okay, now we're playing with their money," my friend said, when things started to go his way. Unfortunately, though, we never got a shooter and the table never got hot, and I noticed that his stack, too, was dwindling. He left me to "take a dinner break," though it seemed early to me—quarter to five. Anyway, I was grateful for his advice, which helped me to lose more money with a little more élan later in the day at Bellagio.

Craps used to hold center stage in Las Vegas casinos, but it has been eclipsed by the more solitary and competitive blackjack. (A clever academic could probably derive an entire sociology from this.) Craps remains the social

game, and in the right circumstances the most fun. At the craps table you root out loud for the shooter, and the shooter talks to the dice, and the woman in gold lamé who's been making the reckless bets jumps into the air when the dealer intones, "Eight the hard way, eight."

The new wisdom in Las Vegas is that people don't come here for the gambling, they come for "entertainment." Logically this has to be true in some sense, since gambling is now so widely available elsewhere. Yet people gamble here who wouldn't gamble elsewhere. They feel free, historically licensed, to do so—that's what the place is for. And gambling still pays the bills: it accounts for about 60 percent of the revenues at an average large hotel. Purists—those who like their corruption uncorrupted—object to the new tourist-paradise Las Vegas, but it may be that the fantasy architecture, like the absence of daylight and clocks inside the casinos, only enhances that sense of suspended reality that can make a hundred-dollar bill look so insubstantial. In any case, whatever the architecture does for the gambling, there is little doubt that the gambling enhances the architecture—it provides the charge in the air, the sense of living dangerously, that keeps the place from being the Disney World it sometimes seems to want to become.

Las Vegas meets one fundamental criterion for a great city: it imposes its own reality on you. The cityscape effectively cuts you off from the outside world, but from time to time you may look down a long side street, get a glimpse of the red mountains beyond, and feel curious about the desert in which the city has grown. One day I rented a car to look around. The desert used to begin right outside the Strip's back door, but Las Vegas has sprawled. Its metropolitan area is the fastest-growing in the country, with a population now of about 1.4 million. (Forty years ago the entire state of Nevada had fewer than 300,000 residents.) To the east and the south development stretches for some twenty miles, all the way to Henderson, and so the drive down to-

ward Hoover Dam (thirty miles from Las Vegas) has become rather dispiriting, in a landscape whose long, treeless views forgive nothing.

On the highway I thought about the theories of the architect Robert Venturi that appeared in a controversial book of a generation ago, *Learning From Las Vegas* (1972), celebrating the free spirit of Strip architecture and chastising reflexive critics of the style. There's something to be said for the Las Vegas aesthetic, which essentially holds that nothing is ugly, and in the city itself you get caught up in this liberating abandon. Even a billboard looks somehow organic, God-given. But the magic wears off at the city line, and I think that's the trouble with Venturi's argument. The Las Vegas aesthetic doesn't travel, isn't "scaleable."

To the west of the city the desert lies closer at hand. It begins abruptly just on the other side of a planned community called Summerlin, which is still under construction. This is one border that will be maintained, thanks to the Bureau of Land Management, which looks after a 200,000-acre tract here called Red Rock Canyon. You can get to it from downtown in less than half an hour. A local resident had mentioned Red Rock to me; the guidebooks give it short shrift, reasonably enough, because most visitors, if they are traveling outside the city, want to see the region's monumental, world-class sites: the Grand Canyon is a four-hour drive to the southeast.

Red Rock isn't monumental, just a place of great and serene beauty, its sparsely vegetated hills undulating toward the bold, wrinkled faces of the Spring Mountains. A sinuous road takes you close to the feature that gives the place its name: a gorge with walls of layered red and tawny sandstone. At numerous outlooks hiking trails head off into the desert, and though I hadn't come planning to hike, I found the idea irresistible. I walked into the mesquite, with one eye on my watch because of a late-afternoon appointment, for as long as I reasonably could. The next time I saw the city, I was dusty of shoe but clearer of mind. Knowing what I know now, I'd save most of a day on even a

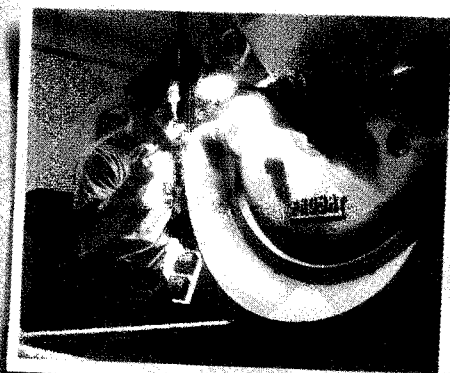
short trip to Las Vegas for a visit to Red Rock Canyon.

It's easy to hate Las Vegas, and it's just about as easy to love it, with a Venturi-like, campy embrace of all that glitters. But as I settled in, I came to wonder if the city doesn't deserve the respect we pay other places, the honor of ambivalence. It was the luxury hotel Bellagio, where I started spending most of my time, that got me thinking this way.

My introduction to Bellagio came through a visit to its Gallery of Fine Art, which announced a show of twenty-six paintings from The Phillips Collection, in Washington, D.C., including works by Monet, Matisse, Bonnard, and Picasso. It is a mark of the way Las Vegas addles the brain that after paying a \$12 admission fee I more than half expected the paintings to be forgeries. But they are real, and in this context seem somehow hyper-real. The show, which runs through March, is an experiment the hotel hopes to repeat with paintings from other museums. The deal: the hotel turns over all the gallery proceeds to the lending museum, which stands to make about a million dollars this time.

Bellagio, which has upped the ante for Las Vegas resorts, poses a problem of perception for the traveler. It contains more than enough excess to qualify as a bona fide Las Vegas experience, starting with its extravagant Lake Como, whose eight acres look more like forty in this desert city. Bridal parties make their way through the Via Bellagio shopping arcade; on past the Gallery of Fine Art and the function rooms, named after artists (tonight in Monet 1-4: the Phoenix 2000 Awards dinner for achievement in the "medical device industry"); and finally to the Wedding Chapels. Meanwhile, the gambling goes on day and night, with an annual "drop," as what's bet at the tables is called, of \$1.4 billion.

But Bellagio is more than diverting. It has some amenities that would be enjoyable in any setting. In a city that has awakened to the pleasures of food, it offers an array of restaurants that could keep you quite happy over several days. Bellagio stands at the forefront of one of those very Las Vegas trends: what



**THE COFFEE BEANS YOU'RE USING NOW
COULD HAVE BEEN ROASTED WEEKS
OR MONTHS AGO. IS THAT WHAT YOU
MEAN BY "A FRESH POT OF COFFEE"?**

When you make a fresh pot of coffee, there may be only one thing missing. Freshness. Because the beans you're using could have been roasted a long time ago. And an old bean is not a flavorful bean.

If you order some beans from us today, they'll be roasted tomorrow morning. And tomorrow afternoon, they'll be shipped out to you. The one exception — there's always one exception, isn't there? — if you order on the weekend, you'll have to wait all the way till Monday for them to be sent.

We never keep stockpiles of roasted beans around. What we roast, we ship. And what we roast, we roast by hand, carefully, in small batches of two or three hundred pounds. It's such a unique, complicated process, we ask our roasters to sign a ten-year commitment to stay and learn the Peet's way of deep roasting.

We don't have to do it this way. But when we say fresh, we mean fresh. And in a few days, you can be enjoying, maybe for the first time ever, some coffee that's really, truly, fresh.

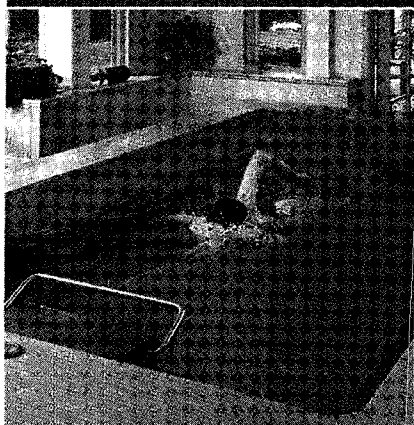
Let us show you how good it can be: We'll make you a three half-pound sampler pack for just \$14.95. Shipping is covered by us and we'll include a free stainless steel scoop. Visit Peets.com/ga or call 1-866-811-5559.

Your satisfaction is guaranteed, absolutely.



Peet's Coffee & Tea

Swim at Home™



Think Of It As A Treadmill For Swimmers!

Swim or exercise against a smooth current adjustable to any speed in a unique pool measuring only 8' x 15'. Enjoy the fun and convenience of the world's best exercise at home year 'round. Ideal for swimming, water aerobics and rehabilitation. Compact size makes the dream of pool ownership practical in small spaces. The Endless Pool™ is simple to maintain, economical to run, and easy to install inside or outdoors. New system reduces chlorine use by 90%.

Free Video!
Call 800-233-0741,
Ext. 1476

Visit our web site at
www.endlesspools.com
or write Endless Pools, Inc.
200 E Dutton Mill Rd
Dept. 1476
Aston, PA 19014



might be called restaurant colonization. It has invited a range of great chefs to reinvent their restaurants here; San Francisco's Aqua, Boston's Olives, New York's Le Cirque, all have outposts at the hotel. These represent major steps beyond the heaping buffets that have historically been Las Vegas's main contribution to cuisine—though Bellagio's buffet has its fans too. At Aqua, I happily violated one of my few surviving life principles (Never eat the inhabitant of one ocean when you're closer to another ocean) to have a salad built around half a Maine lobster and "heirloom" tomatoes—and it was a dish I'll never find in Boothbay Harbor. I did not eat at Picasso, Bellagio's premier restaurant, because to do so I would have needed to book a table two months in advance. Run by the Spanish chef Julian Serrano, it last year won a five-star rating. It features fourteen original works by Picasso on its walls and a brilliant carpet designed by the artist's son, Claude.

Everything is a little bit better at Bellagio. Natural light, in violation of Las Vegas tradition, finds its way into the hotel's common areas through skylighted arcades, a conservatory, and even restaurant windows with a view. Italian craftsmen were brought in to lay the beautiful mosaic tile in the lobby. Cut flowers abound, thanks to a garden and a greenhouse staff numbering 150. The casino's machines have been dimmed and muted, and its low ceiling hung with striped silk fabric. The women who serve drinks, instead of looking like Playboy bunnies, dress in little black suits that would be appropriate at Goldman Sachs, if only their hemlines were a foot or two closer to the ground.

Here is the problem of Bellagio: the hotel is not just amusing—it's kind of ... nice. The rates, of course, reflect the quality: in late fall "deluxe," meaning standard, rooms were around \$300 a night.

Built at a cost of \$1.9 billion, Bellagio is the creation of Steve Wynn, the city's best-known entrepreneur, whose Mirage was before this the ranking luxury resort hotel in town. Wynn no longer runs either place; he was bought out a few months ago by MGM. I spoke

with a Bellagio executive named Alan Feldman, who has been with the hotel from the start, and he gave me a bit of the history: "Unlike The Venetian, Bellagio is only lightly themed. The theme that we had in mind was really just 'romance.' We had thought of classical French styling, but we had also thought of something very modern. In fact, we had a design and announced a hotel built in the shape of a great wave. But then Steve Wynn went to Italy, and he was sailing on Lake Como, and he looked back at the shore and said, 'This is the most romantic place I've ever been. Let's build this.'"

Feldman and I were having a drink—in my case a \$16 glass of Chardonnay—on the terrace of Picasso, looking across Lake Como to Paris, on the other side of the Strip. It was early evening. Each night Bellagio puts on a water show on the lake, geysers erupting from the surface with loud reports, the water exploding into the air like liquid fireworks. The whole show is choreographed to music heard by means of speakers discreetly placed on the perimeter of the lake. The scene we were watching was accompanied by a section of *Appalachian Spring*.

The jets rose and fell in perfect consonance with the swelling music, and in a little interlude just before the Shaker theme is repeated, the sprays dissolved into a cloud of mist. Then, as the state-ly finale began, the water erupted again, with more force. My companion had of course seen this many times before, but he was smiling with what seemed to be unaffected pleasure, and so was I. "Simple gifts indeed," he said. *Boom!* and a new fountain arose before us. Hearing this music, I can never keep the words out of my head, and there they were again. *'Tis a gift to be simple—the water shot up on every beat—'Tis a gift to be free ...* By the close a wall of water stood before us, obscuring all else. Then, as the last chord resolved itself, the water dropped back into the lake. The mist cleared, and the Eiffel Tower was visible once again, its lights glowing in the dusk. At that moment I could not recall having felt before such an emphatic sense of being where I belonged: in America. ■

IT'S A BUG-EAT-BUG WORLD

Biocontrols are the newest old thing in gardening

BY THOMAS C. COOPER

.....

For \$31.87 plus shipping Mike Cherim, the proprietor of The Green Spot, in Nottingham, New Hampshire, will sell you a plastic bottle, about the size of a single-serving juice container, into which are tucked 500 minuscule parasitic wasps. These are *Aphidius matricariae*, which have, in essence, evolved over millennia to rid your garden or greenhouse of aphids. In my garden aphids suck the vital fluids from roses, mock oranges, astilbes, and foxgloves, among other plants, often introducing one or another disease in the bargain. I could control these bugs by spraying them with a stiff chemical cocktail, but I choose not to, because my garden is also populated by birds and bees and butterflies, not to mention two children and a dog, all of which I'm fond of.

Although I do not strictly observe the commandments of organic gardening (I think nothing of sprinkling 5-10-5 on my borders), I prefer natural solutions to pest and disease problems. The tiny parasitic wasps (they're about a tenth of an inch long) are a perfect example. They work like many other parasitoids in the world of biological control, by laying eggs in the abdomens of their hosts, in this case the aphids. The developing larvae devour the aphids' insides as they grow. Once the predator population has wiped out the pest population—and thus its own source of sustenance—it, too, often dies off, in a neat bit of natural symmetry.

I first encountered Mike Cherim and the parasitic wasps in *The Green Methods Manual*, Cherim's privately published book on biological controls. Biocontrols, as they're known, work on the simple principle of fighting fire with fire—pitting a pest's natural enemies against it. Virtually every insect pest has at least one natural predator or parasite or disease whose existence depends on killing insects of that specific kind.

Biocontrols are part of a larger approach to plant care that is called integrated pest management. IPM promotes the use of biocontrols in combination with a range of other low-impact measures such as mulching (to discourage weeds and avoid herbicides), trapping (of, say, apple maggots or slugs), hand-picking (sometimes disgusting, but very effective), and exclusion (with netting and banding). And although there is sharp debate on the topic, many IPM practitioners accept a limited range of chemical sprays in cases of extreme hardship—such as when you return from vacation to discover that the Japanese beetles are holding their annual get-together at your place.

The increasing interest in biocontrols is by no means revolutionary—indeed, little in the world of gardening is brand-new. It more closely represents a return to tactics that have been in use since at least 324 B.C. That's when the first known account appeared of Chinese farmers' deploying ants in their citrus orchards to control caterpillars and beetles. In this country biological controls originally made their mark in 1889, when the introduction of 500 ladybugs saved that year's California citrus crop—and with it the state's citrus industry—from the cottony-cushion scale.

Biocontrol methods gained international attention and credibility in the 1970s and 1980s, when a parasitic wasp brought to a halt a mealybug that was destroying the African cassava crop and was spreading across the continent at a rate of a hundred miles a year. Recently in this country authorities began testing two possible biocontrols to combat the woolly adelgid, an insect that has been killing hemlocks throughout the East: a ladybug from Japan, which does its work the old-fashioned way (by eating large quantities of the adelgid), and



ILLUSTRATIONS BY YANO TEA

Indispensable Travel Pants

Perfectly Packable,
Endlessly Versatile, Always Flattering

These modern classics have the contemporary lines and smooth, flattering fit you can depend on for an entire trip. In fact, they're so versatile you may not need to pack another pair. Triblend of fibers give it a comfortable two-way stretch and wrinkle-resistance. Concealed waist pocket to keep cash, credit cards or papers.

TravelSmith offers the largest assortment of stylish yet comfortable, wrinkle-free travel clothes for men and women anywhere. See why we are the official outfitter for over 100 top travel companies. Call today for your FREE CATALOG.



Indispensable
Travel Pants,
in Carbon
#5562 \$89
DEPT
AT40106

Guaranteed
not to
wrinkle

TRAVELSMITH
800.950.1600
www.travelsmith.com

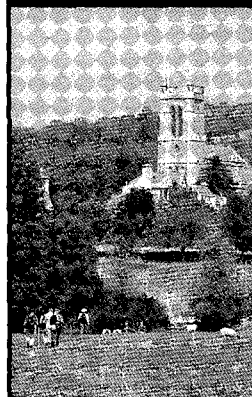
Kalani
ORGANICA
— COFFEES & TEAS —

100% Certified Organic,
Shade-Grown Coffees

Fresh roasted for the deepest flavor and fullest body coffee delivered to your home. Our black, green, and herbal teas available loose leaf and in tea bags.

Free Catalog (800)200-4377
www.kalanicoffee.com

EXPLORE EUROPE ON FOOT!



Country Inns
Local Leaders
Scenic Footpaths
Cultural Journeys
Gourmet Meals
Historic Villages

BCT SCENIC WALKING
For a free catalog
call 1-800-473-1210
www.bctwalk.com

a fungus that uses enzymes to penetrate the skin of the adelgid and eventually eats the thing from the inside out. Demand for beneficial insects of various kinds seems certain to increase, because some pests are growing resistant to chemicals: roughly 450 of them, called superbugs, have developed high levels of resistance to a wide range of pesticides. Increasing resistance requires a constant escalation in the toxicity of the chemicals—a worrisome trend.

None of this is to say that beneficial bugs and other biocontrols are always successful or trouble-free. Every “product” description in *The Green Methods Manual* includes a “drawbacks” section. The drawbacks range from the flightiness of ladybugs, which are apt to wander off en masse if not properly acclimated, to the aggressiveness of greenlacewing larvae, nocturnal predators that, Cherim reports, “can deliver a painful little bite (to people and each other).”

The Green Spot also publishes a catalogue (available free by calling 603-942-8925; *The Green Methods Manual* sells for \$9.95) that’s an A to Z—aphid to whitefly, to be more precise—of good bugs and other environmentally agreeable remedies for everything from Mexican bean beetles and Japanese beetles to leaf miners and various soil pests. There is even a product—a mixture of three species of mini-wasps—for controlling flies around farms, kennels, dairies, and the like. As Cherim matter-of-factly puts it, “Fly management is something we deal in.” Then again, it turns out that certain flies are very effective as pollinators, and Green Spot offerings include houseflies (in pupal form) for this purpose, along with orchard mason bees and two species of bumblebees. All in all, it’s an unlikely cornucopia of natural goodness.

Cherim’s writings in the manual and the catalogue provide a great deal of clear and detailed scientific discussion of the life cycles and interactions of pests and controls. But what particularly captured my attention was the zany streak that runs through his commentaries. The

first time I looked at the catalogue, I happened to stumble on his discussion of *Neoseiulus fallacis*, the all-purpose predatory mite. It begins with glowing praise for this voracious, pinprick-size predator, and goes on to say that unfortunately, the “producer of this product decided the high-pressure demand was too much to bear ... he quit.” Cherim continues, “He is now hanging from his fingernails in our storeroom in hopes that he’ll soon change his mind.” Elsewhere I was taken by the candid sales pitch for a mini-scope (for scouting for bugs), which ends with the comment “Please note: no longer included is the cheesy vinyl carrying case that used to come with it.”

Mike Cherim is the founder, chief scribe, editor, sage of customer service, and owner of The Green Spot. In his writings he struck me as having the heart of a gardener—slightly crazed and obsessed with fighting the good fight—and the head of a New Age scientist. I became fascinated by the idea of meeting him, and so, one sunny day last fall, instead of planting numerous boxes of bulbs, I drove north from my garden in Massachusetts to the company’s office in the woods of southern New Hampshire, about halfway between the Atlantic coast and Concord. You know you’re getting close to Cherim’s haunts when you see bumper stickers saying GOOD BUGS RULE. If not for the bumper stickers, I might have missed the place. I had been expecting something with the look and feel of a plant nursery, but The Green Spot looks more like a fulfillment and customer-service center.

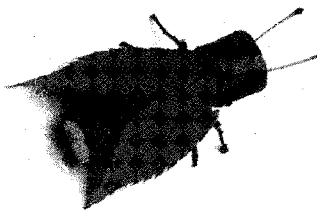
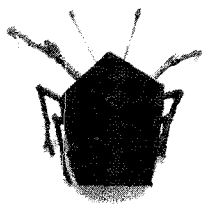
In fact the business started, in 1992, as a small-scale nursery growing culinary herbs for the local market. To guide potential customers, Cherim went around town putting up small hand-painted signs with green spots and arrows on them. Not long after he went into business, Cherim called the state to ask what he should do in the event of trouble

with his herbs. He was looking for non-toxic solutions, suitable for edible crops. The officials thought about it and concluded that they had no answers.

Cherim began scouting around on his own (“scouting” is a key word in his vocabulary and that of any person using biocontrols, because great emphasis is placed on detecting trouble early). He discovered the small but vibrant world of biological controls, and in short order he became a wholesaler, distributor, and retailer. He took out ads in two local papers, *Foster’s Daily Democrat* and the *Manchester Union Leader*, offering *Trichogramma* wasps to help combat the gypsy-moth invasion that was ravaging the New England landscape at the time. Cherim found a receptive market for his parasitic wasps, and the nursery shortly ceased selling plants (“I got tired of waiting around all weekend for one person to come by and maybe buy one plant”). As a bug store rather than a nursery, The Green Spot has thrived. It has been growing by roughly 30 percent a year without renting lists and almost without advertising. The majority of Cherim’s new customers come to him by word of mouth.

Cherim is not alone in the business. More than a dozen other companies specialize in selling biocontrols through the mail (a list of them is available on the California Environmental Protection Agency Web site, at www.cdpr.ca.gov/docs/ipminov/bensuppl.htm), and many other mail-order firms offer one or more biocontrol products. But none produces a catalogue with anything like the same shoot-from-the-hip editorial style. Consider, for example, Cherim’s pitch for bumblebees.

Is the bumblebee the perfect pollinating machine? Yes ... Try it, you’ll like it (never heard of anyone going back to hand pollination after trying bumblebees). Not sold yet? How’s this for a salesman-like line: “... *Kick back and rake in the profits while the bees do the work.*” Sound good? ... And where else can you hire a pollinator for a bee’s wage ... roughly \$0.007 per hour.



Biocontrol companies supply not only home gardeners but also interior and exterior landscape contractors across the country—operations that install and maintain plantings everywhere from public gardens and theme parks to office buildings, hotels, and hospitals. What makes biocontrols so valuable to, say, a theme park is that they can be used to wage war on pests without shutting down the park or endangering employees and visitors. Or consider the ramifications for a hospital with a plant-filled atrium if the plants were sprayed with any of a number of popular broad-spectrum insecticides. The place would need to close down, issue respirators, or send every doctor, patient, and visitor to the parking lot for hours, waiting for the all-clear signal.

On the other hand, Cherim says, chemicals are “forgiving.” He explains: “You don’t have to worry about establishment of a predator. Sure, things happen pretty quickly in the biocontrol world, but not for people who are used to seeing something die before their eyes. Biocontrol can’t offer that kind of instant gratification.” Biocontrol methods require ongoing monitoring, and any control, once introduced, takes time to work.

Cherim does not consider himself either an environmentalist or an evangelist. “I’m not here to create a balance in the environment or to establish thriving populations of good bugs,” he says—though that has been known to occur. “I’m here to create an imbalance to offset another imbalance, to offset the imbalance you created by starting a garden. And maybe if we add together all these counterbalances, we’ll come full circle and achieve some sort of balance.”

When he said that, Cherim and I were standing at the entrance to his office. It was a warm afternoon, and the front door was open. His dog, Salty, a white shepherd, ambled in and spied a grasshopper at the base of a wall. Salty sprang on the grasshopper and gulped it down with satisfaction. Cherim, after watching this performance, turned to me with a grin on his face and said, “See—biological control at work!” **A**



Finely Crafted Leather Footwear For Men

in sizes 6 to 20 and widths AAA to EEEEE

Our classically styled dress and casual designs offer exceptional comfort. Crafted in the United States, Italy and England. Quality athletic shoes too!

Satisfaction Guaranteed!

For a FREE CATALOG call toll-free 1.800.240.7463, code H404Y.

E.T. Wright®

The Paolo
Made In Italy

An American Tradition Since 1876

Accuracy never before even dreamed of...

Atomic Clock™

only \$59.95*

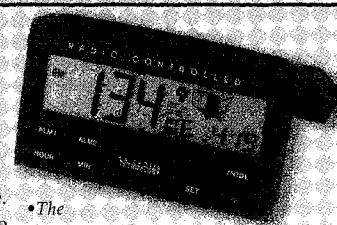
**But read this ad for an even better deal!*

This beautifully styled clock is controlled by a radio signal of the U.S. Meteorological Service. Its master clock is atomically regulated to the same accuracy as U.S. Naval and Energy Department signals and is therefore precise to a minuscule fraction of a second. The Atomic Clock™ has 12/24-hr. display. It features two alarm settings (with snooze alarm) and has full calendar readout. Almost miraculously, the Clock adjusts automatically (ON and OFF) to Daylight Savings Time, displays (and adjusts to) the four continental time zones, and, to top it all off, shows ambient temperature in either °C or °F.

Atomic Clock™ never needs setting. It self-corrects any minute time differentials every 24 hours. The Clock is beautifully styled in black-anodized aluminum and fits gracefully in any decor – modern or traditional.

We are one of the major distributors of this outstanding Clock and can therefore bring you this technical miracle at a price of just \$59.95. **But we have an even better deal: Buy two Atomic Clocks for just \$119.90 and we'll send you a third one, with our compliments – absolutely FREE!** Why make do with clocks that only report the time (no date, no temperature) that may be seconds or even (gasp!) minutes off? Don't put up with it. Order your Atomic Clock(s)™ today!

You may order by toll-free phone, by mail, or by fax and pay by check or Visa/MasterCard. Please give order number #1096F894. Add \$4.95 for ship./ins. and sales tax for CA delivery. You have 30-day refund and one-year warranty. We do not refund postage. For customer service or wholesale information, please call (415) 643-2810.



•The Atomic Clock™ works on one AA-cell, which is included. The calendar display can be switched from day/month/date to month/date/year. The Atomic Clock™ never needs setting.

since 1967
haverhills®

2360 Third St., San Francisco, CA 94107

© Order by toll-free phone: (800) 797-7367 or (fastest!) by fax: (415) 643-2818 ©
Visit our website at www.haverhills.com

SOVEREIGNS OF THE SKY

*In Mongolia a falconer finds the ultimate expression of his sport—
hunting with the majestic golden eagle*

BY STEPHEN BODIO

.....

If you look at photographs of the people of Central Asia, sooner or later you'll see a man with a bird. I have one such picture in a book published in 1930; another, a transparency, has the Russian space shuttle in the background. The man is a Kazakh or a Kyrgyz tribesman; usually he is mounted and wears a fur hat. But the real constant is the bird—a female golden eagle (in Russian, a *berkut*). She stands on her handler's right arm, her head level with his. Her hard-knuckled talons are as large as human hands. Her great eyes may stare unemotionally into the camera or they may be covered by a leather hood.

As a falconer and a writer about human-animal relations, I've always been interested in the Kazakh and Kyrgyz eaglers, the *berkutchi*, whose practices may offer the clearest window onto how people and birds first learned to hunt together. The renowned naturalist and bird artist Roger Tory Peterson once wrote that man emerged from the mists of history with a peregrine falcon perched on his fist. It's a nice image, but it contains the wrong bird. Game hawking specifically with peregrines—a stylized drama in which a small, finicky bird flies over a highly trained dog, "stooping," or diving, at any game bird the dog flushes—has been practiced for only a few centuries, and purely as recreation. Whatever game reaches the table is symbolic, a sign of a successful outing rather than necessary provender.

Falconers can be found in a wide range of cultures today; they may be working-class Englishmen, Turkish peasants, or Arab billionaires. But backtracking along the various trails of the sport, one finds that they all converge on a single location: the Altai Mountains of Central Asia, ancestral home of the Turkic-speaking peoples. The Crusaders brought falconry practices back from the Arabs, who had

learned them from the Turks; the Japanese learned from the Koreans, who had learned from the Chinese, who had learned from tribes "north of the waste." In the high valleys of the Altai, where present-day Siberia, Mongolia, and Kazakhstan come together, herders started hunting with eagles about 6,000 years ago. When I began to pursue my interest in hunting with birds of prey, nearly forty years ago, I soon came across old tales of eagles that brought down large food animals, such as gazelles and deer, and protected their owners' herds against predators, including foxes and even wolves. I knew of nothing like this elsewhere in the world. Over the years the more I stared at the pictures from Central Asia, the more I wondered, Could the traditional practices of the *berkutchi* really have survived decades of forced settlement and collectivization?

In 1995 an old friend, the photographer David Edwards, went trekking in western Mongolia and returned with tales of people "from history, from legend, from myth." He spoke of Mongol sheep feasts, Tsataan who rode reindeer and lived in tepees, Kazakhs who wintered in adobe houses and hunted with eagles. Edwards said that the Kazakhs were hospitable and had eagles in every village. He knew a young Kazakh entrepreneur, Canat, who had learned English in the Soviet army and was willing to guide me. I was ready to go.

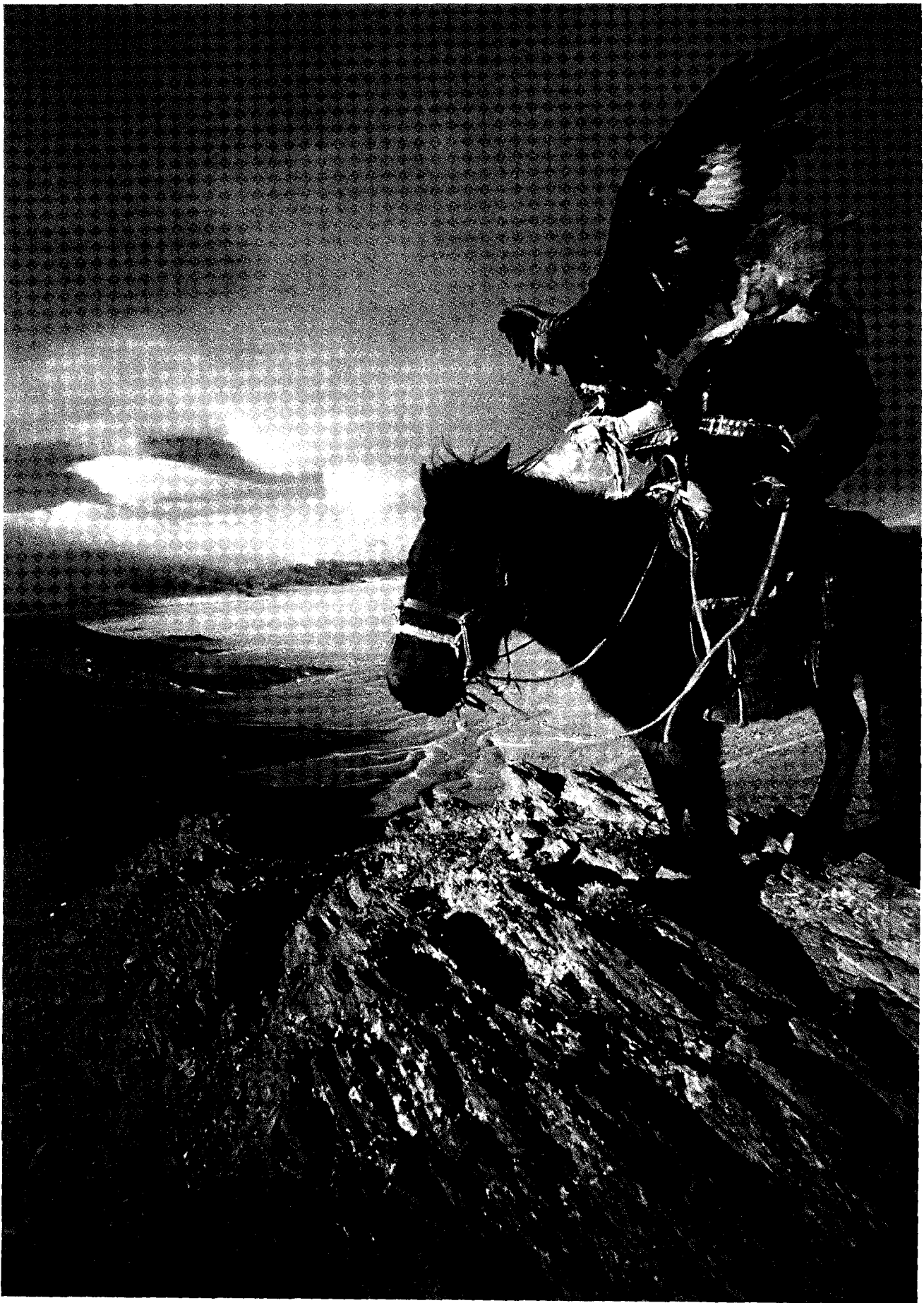
Some weeks later I stood blinking in a Mongolian courtyard in the blazing sun of a February morning. The night before, Canat and I had rattled into the village of Bayaan Nuur, in the northwestern province of Bayaan Olgii Aimag, in a Russian jeep. The village was near the home of Canat's mother-in-law, where we were staying, and Canat knew of a master eagler there. The eagler was a shepherd and potato

farmer named Suleiman. His eagle, a two-year-old, dozed atop a tractor tire. She was nearly three feet from head to tail, thick and broad-shouldered, black-bodied and touched with gold on her neck. She wore a black-leather hood like those I had seen in the photos (eaglers generally keep their birds hooded except when they are flying, so that the birds will stay calm). Her bill was charcoal-colored and gracefully curved; her feet shone like yellow stone. Pale fluff fanned out over the white bases of her tail feathers. Braided leashes connected heavy sheepskin anklets on her legs to the hub of the wheel. In the bright desert light she glowed like a dark sun, as elegant as a living thing can be.

Suleiman ushered us inside to a brilliant-blue room. In it was another eagle, on a roughly carved tripod. A slender young man entered, carrying the first eagle on his right arm and a similar perch under his left. Canat explained that this was Suleiman's apprentice, Bakyt, who owned the second eagle, and that they were going to give the birds a drink. A child brought in a teapot and some lump sugar, decanting the tea into a drinking bowl and sweetening it while Canat translated. "Suleiman says that it is end of season. He has not flown eagles for two weeks. But tea and sugar give them energy, so they will be hungry and fly." Suleiman put one end of a length of rubber tubing into his mouth, like the end of a hookah, and made a joke ("He says it is the exhaust pipe"). He put the other end into the drinking bowl, sucked up some tea, and then emptied it into the first eagle's mouth. He repeated the process. The bird shook her head but otherwise remained still. "Now he will take the eagle's hood off," Canat said. "She will vomit fat if she has any." Indeed, after a moment the eagle gagged, brought up a little tea, shook her head again, and wiped her beak on the perch. She then "roused," shaking down all her feathers, and looked alertly about, as though a morning caffeine dose and purge were the most normal thing in the world. The other bird got a similar dosing, and we were ready to go.

Back out in the courtyard we found a bustling scene of organized chaos, with elements that spanned many cen-

PHOTOS BY DAVID EDWARDS



turies. A camel was signaled to kneel so that its rider could mount. Horses stood waiting as Suleiman gave brisk orders. Hunters slung rifles and shotguns over their shoulders, single-shot twelve-gauge Baikals. Siassi, our driver, fired up our jeep and popped in a cassette; wild Kazakh music with the rhythm of a galloping horse rang out loudly from the speakers. Suleiman motioned to-



ward a ridge about a mile away: we would climb the rocks and sit on top while Suleiman's younger brothers beat the plain below for game. He, Bakyt, and the other riders set off.

A few minutes later we pulled up at the foot of the ridge. Suleiman gestured grandly from the back of his little white stallion, pointing his crop at the crest. "He says he will ride to the top," Canat told me. Astonishingly, Suleiman and Bakyt pointed their horses uphill and trotted straight up the rocks, carrying the eagles on their fists. Canat and I followed more cautiously on foot, holding on to the scant vegetation to keep from falling.

The view from the top was enormous. Red plains flattened out nearly as far as the eye could see. Snowy mountains, the high Altai, fringed the southern horizon; the black peaks in the province of Uvs reared up past the Hovds Gol (Blood River), to the east. Suleiman and Bakyt sat companionably with their eagles on the two highest boulders. Canat and I settled down nearby.

And for the next two hours nothing happened. The hunters sat with a

hunters' calm, which soon flowed into me. Canat talked quietly, quizzing me, for example, about the meanings and etymology of the English word "flush": "Is it the same word? Rabbit flushed. Suleiman's son flush rabbit. We flush *toi-let*?" But mostly we sat and watched.

Suddenly a hare popped out of the thin desert scrub below, well away from any beater. Suleiman unhooded his bird and pointed her toward the running speck. She lowered her head and stared, bobbed her head, stared again, shifted her feet, lifted her tail, and deposited a small amount of liquid droppings to lighten her load. She launched—and flew thirty feet to a rock spire below. She leaned forward, watched intently for a moment, and then sat upright. She looked back at Suleiman, fluffed her feathers, roused and relaxed, and began to

pipe plaintively in his direction.

No falconer needed a translation for those actions: sorry, too much work. Suleiman hiked down to retrieve his eagle and climbed back up to his horse. The hare was gone and the hunt was over, at least for the day.

Suleiman, Canat, and I made our way down, leaving the eagles on the summit under Bakyt's eye. When we reached the foot of the ridge, Suleiman produced a half-frozen hare on a cord from his bag. Birds, especially heavy ones like eagles, will readily fly at a lure for an easy reward even when they are not eager to hunt. He swung the lure until his bird launched herself, and then he dragged it along the sand, screaming like a dying rabbit. The eagle skidded into the lure, feet forward and crest up. Still screaming, Suleiman dragged her a few feet to simulate a fight and then dropped the cord. The eagle began gobbling morsels of the rabbit.

After a moment Suleiman beckoned to Bakyt and began to pull on the eagle-encumbered lure, resuming the dying-rabbit scream and stabbing his gloved hand toward the ridge. As

Suleiman's eagle bristled, I saw a speck enlarging against the clear blue sky: Bakyt's bird, coming in. She circled uneasily and then landed lightly beside the lure. To my surprise, the first eagle moved over, and they began to feed side by side. Suleiman grabbed my hand and pulled me in, encouraging me to stroke the birds, to fold an outstretched wing, finally to hood them. They were more docile than any birds I had ever worked with—even the sweet-natured peregrines I had reared from ten-day-old fluffballs.

That evening, as I talked with Suleiman over shallow bowls of vodka, the reason for the eagles' tameness became apparent: Kazakhs literally live with their birds, conducting daily activities in their presence, eating and even sleeping with them in the room. Western falconers, in contrast, keep their birds in separate houses, where they are alone most of the time. The training methods Suleiman described were straightforward and simple, involving none of the elaborate technology—for example, tiny tail-mounted radio transmitters to keep track of wandering birds—that Western falconers employ. An eagle is fed sitting on the fist or the lure from the moment she is taken from the nest or trapped. Once she learns that she has nothing to fear from her owner and that she is rewarded when she comes back, she is ready to hunt. Instinct has given her all the skills she needs for that.

Suleiman liked to hunt foxes rather than hares or other small game, and he said that a good bird should take forty in a season—a haul that represents a significant amount of income for her owner. (Fox skins are worth the equivalent of \$30 or \$40 each.) "So you train eagles because it is practical?" I said to tease him, knowing there was far more to it. "Not just practical," Suleiman said. "Because it is very traditional, and the most interesting thing I know. I am sixty, and still I am learning."

Finally I asked about his bird's refusal to go after the live hare. Suleiman reminded me that it was very late in the hunting season. His sheep had begun to drop their lambs, and he no longer had time to hunt, so his bird was out of

condition, both physically and mentally. The same was true of Bakyt's bird. Suleiman had dosed them with caffeine and flown them more to be polite to a guest than in expectation of success. In addition, the eagles were beginning their annual moult, during which they cannot be flown. He thought that most of the other eaglers in the area had already stopped flying their birds. To see a successful hunt I would have to come back.

Last fall I returned to Mongolia, accompanied by my wife, Libby. Canat and I had kept in touch over the years, and he agreed to serve as my guide again. This time he suggested that we hunt with his cousin Manai, a fierce-faced expert eagler who lives about twenty miles south of Olgii City.

As it happened, on our first day in Olgii City we ran into Manai in the bazaar. He was wearing a fox-fur hat made from one of his eagle's catches. He had buzzed into town for supplies on the quintessential Kazakh vehicle, a Russian motorcycle. After gathering our own provisions, we piled into Canat's battered Russian van and followed Manai into the tangle of dirt tracks that crisscross the mile-wide plain beneath the Altai. We followed one of the tracks up into the mountains and over a pass at 9,000 feet. Then we turned onto an even more rudimentary road for the climb to Manai's winter cabin, a thousand feet higher.

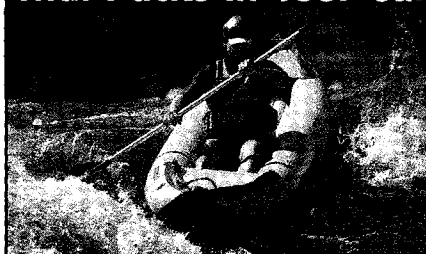
The cabin sat in a narrow valley framed from above by brown hills and dominated by the angular, white-clad mass of a still higher peak. Flocks of choughs and hill pigeons swirled in the deep azure sky, and herds of yaks and horses grazed below. Manai's sons, aged eleven and fourteen, were out hunting with his eagle, a bird he had worked with for two years. When they arrived, the older son dismounted and tossed the eagle to the ground, where she shook down her feathers and stood placidly as he patted her head, much as one would pat a spaniel's. The eagle had gone after but missed a wolf on the volcanic ridge that formed the south wall of the valley. Manai declared that we would hunt there the following day.

We returned the next morning and met up with Manai and a neighbor of his on the ridge. Manai suggested that Canat and Libby drive along the base of the cliff, in order to see the flight in relative comfort, while he and his neighbor rode the ridge, carrying their eagles on their fists. I was to scramble along the side of the slope in order to block any attempts of prey to flee downhill.

A half hour later, sweating and wheezing in my effort to keep up with the horsemen above and the van below, I saw Manai's eagle spring from his glove and start to climb. She unfurled her wings and slid sideways until she caught an updraft from the plain below. Instantly, barely moving her wings, she was carried up. When she reached a height of about 200 feet, she turned back toward us and plummeted. Below her a fawn-colored corsac fox was cascading down the rocky ledges like a furry waterfall. The fox dodged, and the eagle missed, but she recovered, spread her wings, soared up fifty feet, and stooped again. This time there was no escape. The eagle slammed into the fox, raising a cloud of dust and snow that dissipated immediately in the wind. Her wings were spread in a black cloak, her head and crest raised like a dragon's. Suddenly lifeless, in the clutch of her talons, the fox was a compelling token of the most magnificent flight I have ever seen.

Back home, I sorted through the objects I had collected during my trips. They seemed like artifacts retrieved with a time machine: an old hood—a gift from Manai—that had belonged to an eagle who had killed a wolf and later been killed by one, a brand-new hood from Suleiman, a fox pelt. The *berkutchi*'s traditions had survived Stalinism, Russian jeeps, and video games, but I worried about new threats. Canat had told me that ecotourists and trekking expeditions were beginning to discover the Kazakhs. On my wall hangs a photo that gives cause for optimism: caught in a golden beam of afternoon light, Manai strums a *domboro*—a Kazakh two-string guitar—and serenades his eagle with a song he has composed for her. ▀

The Expedition Kayak That Packs In Your Car



Sea Eagle Explorer® 380x Kayak
• Holds 2 adults & gear • Packs In a Bag
• Weighs 45 lbs. • 12' 6" x 3' 3"



See all our boats at
www.seaeagle.com

Because our Sea Eagle Explorer 380x inflatable kayak packs easily in your car, you can take it to white water rivers, remote ponds, scenic lakes or ocean surf anytime. Best of all, the 380x costs far less than other kayaks or canoes. Just 1 of 11 great boats!

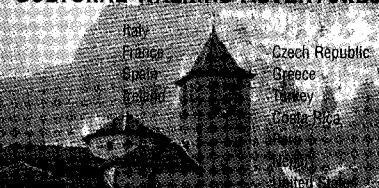
Free Catalog & Sample Material:

Call **1-800-944-7496** dept. AT021B

SEA EAGLE.com

19 N. Columbia St., Port Jefferson Sta., NY 11776

CULTURAL WALKING ADVENTURES



FOCUS ON THE EXPERIENCE!

WHOLE JOURNEYS™

www.wholejourneys.com

Free Catalog:
1-877-745-4648

info@wholejourneys.com

The Aeron® Chair For Less!



- In Stock ...Fast Delivery!
- Thousands Sold
- Fully Authorized Retailer of Herman Miller
- Best Price Anywhere!

Only \$699!

1-877-658-LESS



www.AM.Sit4Less.com

BOOKS & CRITICS

BOOKS

THE WEDDING MERCHANTS*Marriage is in Chapter Eleven, but the white wedding is in the black*

BY CAITLIN FLANAGAN

.....

I do not plan to have another wedding; I'm standing pat at two. But I must confess that after spending a pleasant hour gazing at the photographs in the newest crop of wedding guides, I began to feel a bit of the old itch. There is something deeply seductive about a wedding: romance in its great last stand, before it is sullied by routine and responsibility. Even a picture of that ill-fated girl Diana Spencer (one of eight in Letitia Baldrige's *Legendary Brides*), standing at the steps of St. Paul's, her veil caught in a gust of wind and her father waiting beside her, can provoke in me a vague yet undeniable longing. But it took only a few minutes of actually reading the texts of these manuals (which are often published in midwinter to serve the many brides planning June campaigns) to bring me to my senses. More than mere fondness for my husband keeps me from getting on the phone to price tea roses and a tent.

Planning a wedding is hell. Things are said. Doors are slammed. Quarrels about the most inconsequential things—yellow tablecloths or white? hors d'oeuvres set out on tables or passed around on trays?—are often pitched at such a level that it seems the combatants may never recover from them. Much of the anxiety, of course, is tribal. It is wrenching to have to open the sacred circle to admit an outsider. If, as Joan Didion once wrote, “marriage is the classic betrayal,” then a wedding is the Judas kiss, public and terrible. But what brings people almost to the breaking point (emotional, social, financial) is that



white weddings as they are currently practiced in America—with flocks of attendants, and dinner dances for hundreds of guests, and a code governing every moment of the proceedings—don't come naturally to most. Perhaps they don't come naturally to anybody other than the members of the \$70 billion-a-year wedding industry (a staggering \$19 billion is spent on gifts alone), who seem to have all but created the contemporary event, weaving together attractive bits of genuine tradition and bolts of pure invention.

Before World War II the idea that a girl of modest means would expect any of the purchased grandeur common today would have been laughable. She would have been familiar with the elements of such a ceremony, would have

seen lavish movie weddings and photographs of society and royal ones, but she would not imagine that those events had much to do with her own plans. She would have been married much as her mother was: her best friend would stand up for her, and everyone would look forward to a nice party afterward at the bride's home, the two mothers wearing corsages and ladling punch.

But times have changed, and middle-class couples are routinely trading the down payment on a first house for a single eye-popping party. Ilene Beckerman ponders the shift in the charming little book *Mother of the Bride: The Dream, the Reality, the Search for a Perfect Dress*. After being confronted with her daughter's hideously complex reception menu, Beckerman can't help herself: “When

CSA ARCHIVE

your father and I were married at your grandmother's house in Queens," she tells her aggrieved daughter, "we served deli platters. Everybody loved them."

Nowadays every aspect of a formal wedding has become so intensely merchandized as to render its original design and purpose almost unrecognizable. The bridal registry, for example, was once a means by which a young couple could acquire the basic accoutrements of good housekeeping. Now couples old enough to have fully stocked homes—not to mention full-grown children—register for loot. They can be seen trolling through Williams-Sonoma and Pottery Barn and Target, carrying barcode scanners and zapping anything that looks good. The trend toward multiple showers means that a guest may return to a couple's registry several times. Web sites such as the Wedding Channel and the Knot provide an opportunity for couples to showcase their weddings for their friends—and to put those friends a click away from the bride's registry, where a gift can be selected and paid for in a matter of minutes.

Everything is big. The wedding invitation, once the model of a certain kind of brevity, is now often a mere component of a thick dossier with multiple stamps. "What's this fat, unsolicited envelope in your mail, packed with forms that you must fill out and instructions that you must obey?" asks Judith Martin, in her *Miss Manners on Weddings*; she concludes that it is, in fact, a wedding invitation from "people who have gone around the bend." In the many published accounts of people's experiences planning and hosting weddings, couples are constantly getting blind-sided by the professionals, never imagining the pressure that vendors would put on them to consider various trifles absolutely essential. Just as the morticians whom Jessica Mitford described in *The American Way of Death* (1963) preyed on the grief and guilt of mourners, so do the wedding merchants capitalize on the emotional vulnerability and social anxiety that afflict people planning a formal wedding. If you love her, shouldn't you spend two months' salary on the diamond she's going to wear forever? Would you deny a cher-

ished daughter the same sort of party that all her friends had?

In a memoir detailing her engagement, wedding, and early married life, *Something New: Reflections on the Beginnings of a Marriage*, Amanda Beesley describes a moment of clarity in which the economics of her planned event came into sharp focus: she had spent a month's rent on her dress, and "the 'deluxe' Porta-Johns, with mirrors and running water," that she had selected "would have paid off two months' worth of my student loan." Setting aside the advisability of buying an expensive dress for anything that is going to involve Porta-Johns, no matter how whiz-bang, the confession is hardly unusual: young people routinely engineer weddings that are well beyond their means.

How did we get here? The idea that the formal white wedding might not be the purview solely of society types began during the postwar rush to the altar, which saw droves of working people—who finally had a bit of disposable income—having weddings more elaborate than their parents'. The first American book devoted to bridal etiquette was published in 1948, heralding the notion that one might clip from an entire volume of social convention a single attractive chapter.

The hugely influential 1950 movie *Father of the Bride* traded on the new national interest in the particulars of this kind of event, and it portrayed the shift toward grander weddings. Although the bride's parents are well off, they were married simply, "in your front parlor," Mr. Banks reminds his wife; but she is unmoved by this memory or by her husband's pride in having worn a plain blue suit rather than a cutaway. Despite the old man's remonstrations, it is decided that their daughter, iconically played by Elizabeth Taylor, will not follow this family tradition: she will have a different kind of wedding "with bridesmaids and churches and automobiles and flowers and all that" (Although the film's wedding provided a specific fantasy for a generation of young women, many of today's brides would turn up their noses at it: refreshments consisted of assorted sandwiches, some ice cream, and small

Books discussed in this essay



LEGENDARY BRIDES

by Letitia Baldrige
HarperCollins, 2000

**MOTHER OF THE BRIDE:
THE DREAM, THE REALITY,
THE SEARCH FOR A PERFECT DRESS**

by Ilene Beckerman
Algonquin, 2000

MISS MANNERS ON WEDDINGS

by Judith Martin
Crown, 1999

**SOMETHING NEW: REFLECTIONS
ON THE BEGINNINGS
OF A MARRIAGE**

by Amanda Beesley
Doubleday, 2000

**PRICELESS WEDDINGS FOR
UNDER \$5,000**

by Kathleen Kennedy
Three Rivers Press, 2000

**THE BEST FRIEND'S GUIDE
TO PLANNING A WEDDING**

by Lara Webb Carrigan
ReganBooks, 2001

WEDDINGS FOR DUMMIES

by Marcy Blum and Laura Fisher Kaiser
IDG Books Worldwide, 1997

EMILY POST'S WEDDING ETIQUETTE

Fourth Edition, by Peggy Post
HarperResource, 2001

WEDDINGS: A CELEBRATION

by Beverly Clark
Wilshire, 1996

WEDDINGS

by Martha Stewart, text by Elizabeth Hawes
Clarkson N. Potter, 1987

**THE BEST OF MARTHA STEWART
LIVING: WEDDINGS**

edited by Martha Stewart
Clarkson N. Potter, 1999

MARRY ME!

by Bradley Gerstman,
Christopher Pizzo, and Rich Seldes
Cliff Street, 2000

cakes.) Facilitating the new preference for such affairs was the growing availability in the 1950s of both mass-produced wedding gowns and rented formal wear for men. This kind of institutionalized formality, however, had a difficult time co-existing with the social upheaval of the 1960s, and by the seventies the big white wedding (along with its dud pal, marriage) was in a period of retrenchment. Tricia Nixon's 1971 wedding in the Rose Garden was considered by many to be Squaresville itself.

The lights came back on in the summer of 1981, when alarm clocks rang in the dead of night so that millions of Americans could witness Charles and Diana plighting their troth in real time. The doings of the British royal family may constitute a poor template for contemporary American life, but the timing was right. The Reagans had just begun their stylish reign, and lavish entertaining had made a triumphant return. Although there has been some waxing and waning (such as a brief bridal scaling down after Black Monday, in 1987), for the most part the wedding world changed and has stayed changed.

The problem is that we put the formal white wedding into cold storage for so long that we're a little unclear about what, exactly, is involved. Further, the social changes that have so profoundly reshaped American life in the past half century have mowed down virtually every institution that the traditional wedding once sanctified. To stage a white wedding as the form was originally conceived requires a woman young enough that her very age suggests a measure of innocence, the still-married parents who have harbored her up to this point, and a young man of like religious affiliation who is willing to assume responsibility for her keep. Trying to pull off this piece of theater in light of the divorce culture, the women's movement, the sexual revolution, and the acceptability of mixed and later marriages threatens to make a complete mockery of the thing. It's like trying to stage a nativity pageant without a baby and a donkey: you can do it, but you're

going to need one hell of a manger.

The modern bride, of course, doesn't dwell on any of this. She is, after all, the daughter of one of the most profound cultural shifts in American history, and this is part of her birthright: the freedom to sample, on an à la carte basis, the various liberties that young womanhood offers. She can gratefully accept a handful of condoms from her guidance counselor and also be assured that no one will laugh when she shows up at her wedding, on her father's arm, wearing a floor-length beaded white gown. And besides, there's no time to think about all of this—there's so much to *do*! Sending welcome baskets to the hotel rooms of out-of-town guests, learning the precise way to tether a gold band to the ring bearer's satin pillow, discerning which participants must be thanked not only with a note but also with a gift—there's no end to it.

Fortunately, in view of this bewildering array of wedding essentials, a standing army of professionals has been quietly assembled during the past two decades, one consisting of salespeople and "wedding coordinators" and Website designers and also authors, who have flooded the market with wedding books so numerous that they would force the library at Alexandria to resort to auxiliary storage. Most of the books fall roughly into three categories: etiquette books that attempt to pistol-whip the masses into decent behavior; glossy wish books that hope to imbue the readers' events with the authors' own good taste; and gritty down-and-dirties that address the awfulness of it all head-on, albeit comically.

A fourth and steadily growing category comprises books that cater to brides who realize that the wedding business is a racket and who don't want to bust the bank for one five-hour party. Many of these books, such as Kathleen Kennedy's *Priceless Weddings for Under \$5,000*, are very fine. The problem occurs when they focus on how to procure bargain-basement opulence, on how to

cut corners ruthlessly on a fancy party rather than throw a simpler one. Kennedy's suggestion that one might offer a full bar but issue each guest two drink tickets is just a bad, bad idea. A recent bride, Lara Webb Carrigan, has written a book called *The Best Friend's Guide to Planning a Wedding*, which contains a description of a Vera Wang sample sale that makes the event sound like a little corner of hell, with punchy, exhausted brides waiting in line for hours in hopes of scoring a bit of picked-over cut-rate couture. It's hard to get it right when it comes to this particular intersection of money and class. No less an authority than *Weddings for Dummies* sums up the problem nicely—or, rather, Epictetus (whom the authors, Marcy Blum and Laura Fisher Kaiser, quote) does: "Know, first, who you are; and then adorn yourself accordingly." Leave it to one of the ancients to put a fine point on a modern problem: weddings today are often made comical or ghastly by their obvious overtones of strenuous social climbing. The editor-in-chief of *Bride's* magazine, Millie Martini Bratten, told me that the modern wedding represents "a chance to reach beyond your station," and she's right. Class aspiration is nothing new, but there was certainly a time when a girl who aped the ways of rich folk on her wedding day would have won herself more derision than respect.

The wedding merchants know that selling "class" would set off alarms in most people's heads, so what they proffer instead is "tradition," and the modern bride pays cash on the barrelhead for it, never realizing that the wholesale acquisition of other people's traditions is an enterprise fraught with pitfalls (if she put down *Legendary Brides* for a minute and picked up *The Great Gatsby* instead, she might think twice).

Genuine tradition is not for sale, because no one needs to buy it; it's moored in the customs of one's own family (remember them?). If Dad feels like a complete chump in his Sir Elegance tux, you've just learned something about your tradition. What the altar-bound of today end up buying from their numberless vendors is a dog's breakfast of bridal excess—part

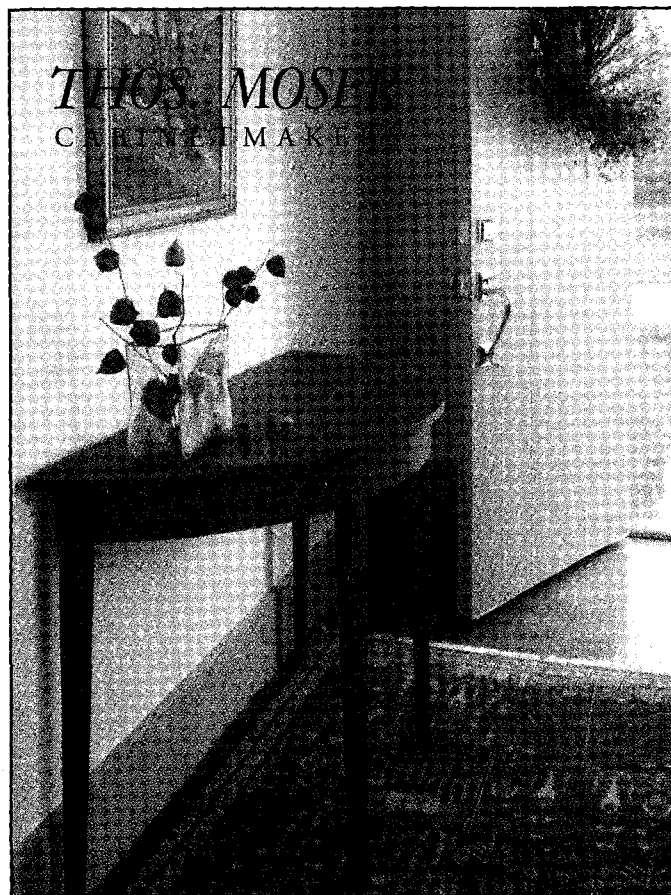


DRAWINGS BY STEVEN SALERNO

society wedding of the twenties, part Long Island Italian wedding of the fifties. It's *The Philadelphia Story* and *The Wedding Singer* served up together in one curious and costly buffet.

When the etiquette experts are asked about these hybrid events, how can they possibly know to which standards the questioner is hoping to hew? Often couples want to throw weddings that will be interpreted as "social" (WASP classy) but that include whatever "ethnic" elements look good to them. Miss Manners, by her own admission, tends "to become snappish during wedding season," and I don't blame her. When she attempts to construct a firebreak, she gets blasted. She informed one mother of the bride that her daughter's plan to carry a "money bag" with her during the reception constituted nothing less than "simple social blackmail." "She is counting on the guests forking over under the threat of embarrassment. This is not exactly what we call hospitality." But another Gentle Reader scolded Miss Manners for failing to do some research on other cultures in which such a custom is commonplace: "If Miss Manners thinks her uppity manners prevail everywhere, she has another think coming." Emily Post—now in the guise of her great-granddaughter-in-law Peggy Post, in *Emily Post's Wedding Etiquette*—deals with ethnic variances by abandoning her station and going PC. Peggy lumps the lucrative customs—including the "money dance," which, if successfully completed, results in "bride and groom ... covered with cash"—together with central elements of Jewish and traditional African-American weddings in a separate chapter called (you guessed it) "Multicultural Weddings."

Bridal salespeople toss around the words "tradition" and "heirloom" with a galling vulgarity that is particularly evident in a captivating Learning Channel series called *A Wedding Story*. Each episode of the documentary-style program follows one couple through their courtship and engagement (as recounted during crosscut interviews with bride and groom), and the cameras tag along to the rehearsal, the ceremony, and the reception. The couples often have solid but not especially high-

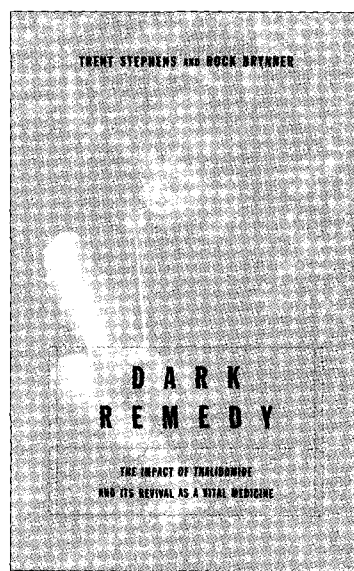


*Timeless
designs
and lasting
craftsmanship.*

Call toll-free
for our catalog:
1-877-708-1973

Freeport, Maine
New York City
San Francisco
www.thosmoser.com

This is the story, never before told, of how Thalidomide—the infamous drug that caused the greatest medical disaster in history—has made an astounding comeback as a life-saving treatment today.



"Here is a superb medical tale, by turns terrifying and encouraging, told fully and truthfully by a major scientific authority and an excellent writer."

Sean Wilentz, co-author of *The Kingdom of Matthias*

"A fascinating and important dissection of a tragedy and the belated attempts to redress it. The authors have done society a service."

Harold Evans, author of *The American Century*

AT BOOKSTORES EVERYWHERE
www.perseuspublishing.com



PERSEUS PUBLISHING A Member of the Perseus Books Group

paying jobs (*Wedding Story* careers have included hair stylist, nurse, and police officer); they spend what must be a staggering amount of their income on these events, and they can often be glimpsed at the very point of purchase.

In one episode an engaged couple, Ivette and Joe, are led into a jeweler's inner sanctum to get a first look at the ring they have ordered. But as the salesman relinquishes it to them for inspection, he rattles off a bit of boilerplate: "This is the beginning of your family's heirloom. This is what you're going to pass on to your children and your children's children. It is the thing that bonds the two of you, and I want you to appreciate it and treat it that way." Ivette and Joe do not seem at all surprised to find themselves lectured by a diamond merchant. In our culture the wise counselors who instruct young people on the most important ritual of their lives *are* salesmen. Nor do the couple seem to realize that if the man is telling the truth, they can simply go home and wait for a family member to fork over *Ivette's* heirloom ring.

One opulent wedding guide, *Weddings: A Celebration*, by Beverly Clark, lionizes the gimmick of a bride who bought a seventeenth-century Bible in which couples—presumably of the same family—had recorded important events for some 300 years. She and her groom then added their wedding date to the list, a gesture of almost comical crassness. A family tradition, it turns out, is something that fancy folk do and that you can do too—against the knowledge that your future daughter may not have any more truck with your choices than you had with your mother's.

Of course, the woman who long ago branded tradition as a commodity on the American open market is Martha Stewart, and she established herself in the business of wedding traditions very early on. With her uncanny ability to predict—and often to forge—the hottest societal trends, she was on top of the white-wedding craze not long after Princess Diana braced herself and thought of England. Her 1987 publishing phenomenon, *Weddings*, helped to cement her reputation as one of our most important cultural figures. Its pride of place in the wedding-wish-book

canon has been challenged only by the publication of a second volume, *The Best of Martha Stewart Living: Weddings*.

In fairness, Stewart has always been great at fanning the mini-flames of actual tradition: in the introduction to her first book, *Entertaining* (1982), she wrote that when she wants the "comfort of childhood" to come flooding back, she whips up some of her mother's Polish specialties, some nice "pierogi or stuffed cabbage." One has long sensed, however, that it is other people's traditions that she really has her eye on, and the autobiographical sketch in *Weddings* gives a clue as to whose traditions they are. When she decided to marry Andy Stewart, "it seemed appropriate to be married in St. Paul's Chapel at Columbia in an Episcopalian service, mainly because we didn't have anyplace else to go." It sounds like a lovely affair, but surely it would have been "appropriate," strictly speaking, for an *Episcopalian* (or talk about "appropriate"—two of them) to be married at St. Paul's Chapel at Columbia in an Episcopal service.

The Stewart enterprise is powerful enough and thoroughly enough girded with her unquestionable style (my God, the woman's way with simple white daisies) that many absurdities get subsumed in the larger picture. The irony is that many Stewart-inspired events are occasions from which members of the true WASP ascendancy—frugal, abhorrent of excess—would flee as fast as their skinny little legs could carry them. The WASPs whom the wedding merchants hope to conjure are more on the order of the robber barons and their families—people like Alva Vanderbilt, who managed to fuse her daughter Consuelo to the Duke of Marlborough, and celebrated the family's new acquisition in an explosion of pink and white flowers in St. Thomas Episcopal Church on Fifth Avenue. Or they're WASPs as imagined by Hollywood screenwriters: Katharine Hepburn's Tracy Lord invited 506 guests to the reception after her second wedding, in *The Philadelphia Story*. Couples who think they are striking a classically American chord with their tuxedo-clad

swing bands and galaxies of trumpet lilies might consider the sentiments of the super-WASP poet Elinor Wylie (who left her husband for a married man—no wonder we look to these people for wedding-day guidance): "Down to the Puritan marrow of my bones / There's something in this richness that I hate."

If class confusion is the order of the day at many white weddings, these occasions are also chock-full of conflicting messages regarding the bride's sexual experience. The white dress; the hand-off from father to groom; the lifting of the veil, which undresses the bride just a bit; and the presence of flowers and small children (evoking the fertility that will soon be unleashed) are all popular components—in various combinations—of the modern wedding.

Perhaps most representative of this ambiguity is the kiss that concludes the wedding ceremony, permission for which is granted only after bride and groom have been legally transformed

into man and wife. Often, Miss Manners writes, the kiss "draws laughter, as if it were a love scene viewed by an audience of early adolescents." Although few couples would forgo this crowd-pleasing bit of business, many have reshaped its purpose, using it not to mark a newly sanctioned physical relationship but rather to give a peek at one that is already red-hot. More than once during the rehearsals on *A Wedding Story* I have seen the officiant instruct the intendeds to approach this moment with a bit of decorum. What patsies these poor clergy members must feel like, forced into the role of a sexual naif primly instructing a young man who has been living with his girlfriend for the past three years that he "may kiss the bride." Well, why not? He's been doing God knows what else to her since the night they met at the softball-league happy hour.

To pick up an issue of *Bride's* magazine, which has been instructing American women on weddings since 1934, is to find this confusion writ large. In one respect *Bride's* harks back to a time



when women's magazines never mentioned sex at all, and the advice on offer was of a most genteel nature. A recent issue is full of the kind of pointers that well-bred mothers have given their daughters for generations: write the thank-you note as soon as you get the gift; send the announcement to the newspaper several weeks before the wedding. The advertisements (and they are staggering in number) feature brides so demure that many of them can't even look us in the eye; they gaze off in deepest repose or trail clouds of tulle through the marble lobby of the Ritz-Carlton, Pentagon City. The reader of *Bride's*, it seems, is meant to make an imaginative leap, to enter a world of untouched ladies preparing chastely for their most special day.

And yet, I'm not quite sure what to make of the young miss who writes that "a few months ago, my fiancé and I"—"fiancé": old-fashioned word, isn't it?—"started watching porn together," which has caused the couple a specific problem that I had no idea was within the purview of *Bride's* magazine. Then there's the unfortunate woman who seems to have spent down her sexual capital a little too early in the game: "I promised my fiancé that once we were engaged, I'd do anything he wanted, sexually speaking. Now he's suggesting a threesome." (This is one of the reasons those unliberated but canny girls of an earlier era didn't put out until after they had tossed the bouquet: they didn't want to have to put the kibosh on icky sexual fantasies before they'd established joint checking.)

The problem of introducing drama to the wedding night is a big one, and *Bride's* tackles it unflinchingly. It's uphill all the way. The bride should consider packing her honeymoon suitcase with "a bunch of sex-research books" and "two highlighter pens in two different colors." Call Domino's and pass the No-Doz; it's gonna be an all-nighter. If she's absolutely determined to unveil a new trick, the bride might consider a suggestion that involves a thirty-six-inch strand of acrylic pearls, preferably strung on nylon, and some water-based personal lubricant, although she is cautioned (in what may be the issue's sin-

**THE DIFFICULTY
OF BEING A DOG**

ROGER GRENIER
translated by alice kaplan

A literary dog walk through history, from Ulysses to Napoleon to Freud.

"[A]n appealing gift item, this slim volume will make lovers both of literature and canines sit up and take notice."

Publishers Weekly

"To call this magnificent work a book about dogs is to shortchange it."

Elizabeth Marshall Thomas

Cloth \$22.00

Available in bookstores.

**The University
of Chicago Press**
www.press.uchicago.edu

Solid Hardwood Media & Component Cabinets

Provides Unlimited Storage For CDs, DVDs, Video Tapes, LPs, LaserDiscs, Cassettes & A/V Components.

Doesn't Your Collection Deserve The Best? Find out just how affordable top quality is. Request Info Kit 5 & Get All The Facts...

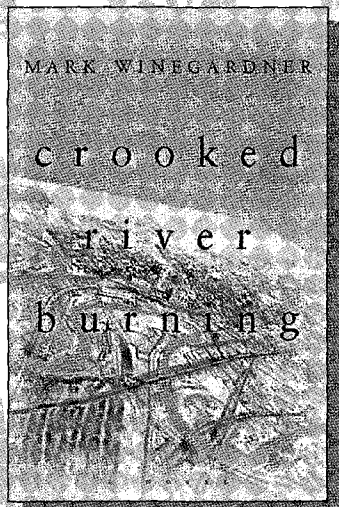
Call: 800-895-5241 Fax: 215-258-1241

SORICÉ

PO BOX 301-45, Perkasié, PA 18944
info@sorice.com (e-mail) <http://www.sorice.com> (website)

WHAT'S ON YOUR READING LIST?™

(Personal recommendations from your independent booksellers with BOOK SENSE)



ANNE WHALEN, BROOKLINE BOOKSMITH,
BROOKLINE, MASSACHUSETTS

"If you like a big, involved, warm, and funny story, you're going to love **CROOKED RIVER BURNING**. It's got romance, Elliott Ness, politics, early rock 'n' roll, and the Cuyahoga River (burning of course). What more could you want?"

Harcourt hardcover now in stores.

Show your independence by visiting a bookstore with Book Sense and let a knowledgeable bookseller assist you in finding what you need.

For an independent bookstore near you, call

1-888-BOOKSENSE

or visit

www.BookSense.com

BOOK

sense™
Independent Bookstores
for Independent Minds

PERSONALITY

PASSION

KNOWLEDGE

COMMUNITY

CHARACTER

gle best piece of advice) to "be careful with the necklace's clasp."

In one sense, all this is in line with the kind of information to be found in many magazines aimed at today's young single women—publications that have supplemented frank information about reproductive health with step-by-step sexual instruction (a typical copy of *Jane* makes the *Kama Sutra* look like a compendium of calisthenics for senior citizens). It seems in today's climate that only prudes and religious fanatics suggest that young women ought to forgo sexual experience before marriage; very few grooms, certainly, are troubled by a bride's colorful past. *Marry Me!* is a recent book by three "professional guys" who share the secrets of snaring one of their elite confraternity (and any woman hell-bent on becoming the helpmeet of an orthopedic surgeon, an accountant, or a lawyer should by all means pony up the \$13.98 for Amazon's overnight-shipping option). Along with some repeated—and to my mind rather pointed—advice along the lines of "*Never comment in any way about your man's penis being small*," the brain trust informs readers how many men they can sleep with and still end up married to a CPA: ten. You're not necessarily out of luck if you worked your way through most of Sigma Chi during junior year, but you are going to have to lie about it.

But the sexual experience (or, rather, sexual ennui) of the contemporary couple accounts in no small part for why—much to the delight of caterers and banquet-hall operators everywhere—today's wedding receptions seem never to end: with only a dispiriting and possibly dangerous interlude with acrylic pearls awaiting them in the bridal suite, there is nothing to hurry the principals off the dance floor. The couple is far more interested in boogying down at the opulent party they've ordered—after all the hard work, a chance to have some fun!—than in attending to the drudgery of consummating the marriage. There was a time when a wedding wasn't just a fancy party, when it commemorated an occasion of tremendous moment, as true ritual always has—in this case the beginning of a woman's sexual life. The

reception was once marked by a particular kind of shared anxiety, which fostered a genre of American humor that is now all but lost: the wedding-night joke. The clanging of tin cans tied to getaway cars struck a primal note that nobody failed to locate and that no amount of Ritz-Carlton catering can ever reproduce.

Today a wedding unites a couple who may or may not spend the rest of their lives together and who may or may not have nullified the spirit of their every promise with an ironclad prenuptial agreement. Usually the sexual union has already occurred, and oftentimes cohabitation, with its disappointments and indignities, is in full swing. A bride's beautiful white gown and her flock of flower-bearing attendants may constitute nothing more than an enduring female attraction to the sort of thing that would make Betty Friedan lean her old gray head against the keyboard and weep. Or they may be part of a frantic and terribly expensive effort to infuse a wedding with some small measure of the meaning it once had.

A little more than thirty years ago Joan Didion reported, in *Slouching Towards Bethlehem*, on the Las Vegas wedding industry—which, she found, was not based solely on "the premise that marriage, like craps, is a game to be played when the table seems hot." She found instead that the Vegas wedding chapels, "with their wishing wells and stained-glass paper windows and their artificial bouvardia," were in fact selling "niceness, the facsimile of proper ritual, to children who do not know how else to find it."

Today's children do know where to find "proper ritual." They find it in a thousand showrooms and expos and trunk sales; they skip out on student loans to pay for it; and when they need more cash for the limos, they transform their bridal registries into complicated money-laundering operations (a place setting of Lenox is, after all, a liquid asset). One can't help thinking that they would trade every bit of it for one simple, elusive assurance: only death will part us. ▀

"THE FIRST HIP WHITE PERSON"

BY JAMES MARCUS

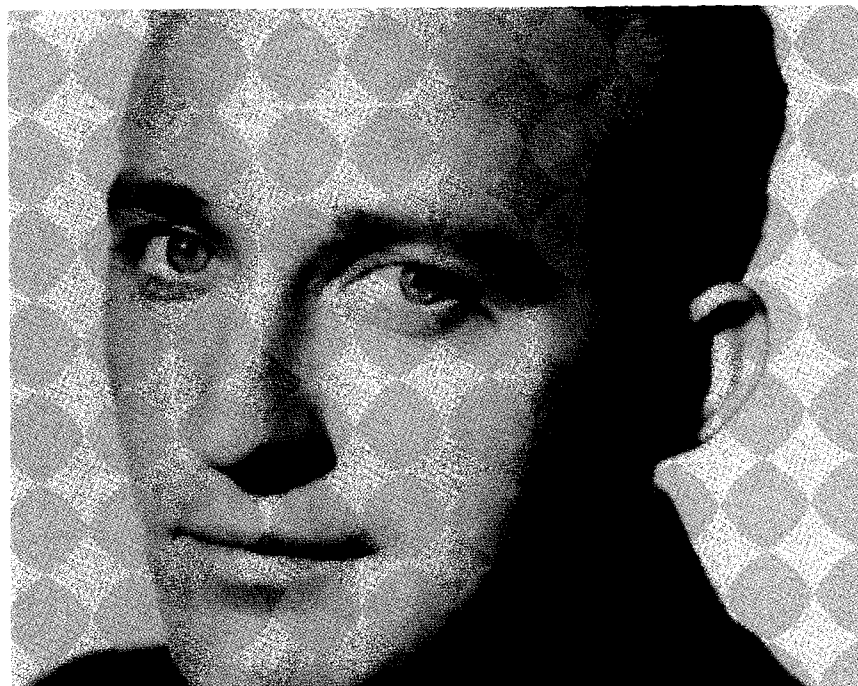
.....

Is this the right moment to inaugurate a huge double-decker biography of Bing Crosby? Since his death, in 1977 (which took place, appropriately enough, on a golf course, where the seventy-four-year-old crooner had just shot a very creditable 85), his reputation has gone into eclipse. He hasn't, to be sure, vanished from the cultural map. Yet Crosby increasingly seems like the sole inhabitant of a kind of white-bread Mount Rushmore. He's not hip or sexy or tortured enough to rise from the show-biz ashes in the manner of, say, Tony Bennett (who, happily, lived long enough to enjoy his own resurrection).

In the superb *Bing Crosby: A Pocketful of Dreams*, Gary Giddins is quick to acknowledge his subject's dwindling mystique—the result, he argues, “of having played Everyman too long and too well.” But Giddins also makes a strong case for Crosby as the prime mover of American pop culture, who shaped it in his own affable image for more than three decades.

Without any dramatic outward change, he had somehow been the right man for successive crises, assertive and optimistic through Prohibition, the Depression, and hot and cold wars. He had the chameleon's ability to reflect his surroundings and the artist's discernment to illuminate them ... Bing, in his peculiar motley (shirttails, beat-up hats, torn sweaters, mismatched socks) with his pipe and preternatural calm, embodied the best in American individualism.

Harry Lillis Crosby was born on May 3, 1903, in Tacoma, Washington. Three years later his parents, clinging precariously to their middle-class perch in a boom-and-bust economy, moved the family to Spokane. There the young Harry—whose devotion to a Sunday newspaper feature, “The Bingville Bugle,” led to his eventual rechristening—enjoyed a classic small-town youth, whittling, stealing cher-



ries, and swimming in the millpond. Crosby's boyhood suggests nothing so much as an Irish Catholic version of Huckleberry Finn's, albeit one with the benefit of elocution classes and an up-right piano.

In the golden age of the parlor sing-along the fact that Crosby's father had insisted on shipping the family's piano inland from Tacoma was hardly unusual. But his purchase of an Edison Phonograph was another matter entirely. This contraption, the first in the neighborhood, played cylinders, amplifying the music through a kind of Victorian ear trumpet. Giddins writes,

The marvelous machine, patented nearly three decades earlier by Thomas Edison, ... filled the house with trebly, tinny, yet vividly exuberant and often exotic sounds. Radio, as an entertainment medium, was more than twenty years in the future. But for now they had this pipeline to the world and its music.

It's worth dwelling on exactly what sorts of performers made their trebly, tinny passage through that pipeline. At the time, American music and its listeners hadn't yet been balkanized into distinct (and often warring) factions. Light classics existed cheek by jowl with min-

strely, patriotic flag-wavers, Irish ballads, and vaudeville shtick. This freed Crosby early on from what we might call the tyranny of good taste. It also foreshadowed his own cross-pollinating tendencies as a performer: by the mid-1930s he would sing *anything*, in any genre, transforming dross into gold with amiable regularity.

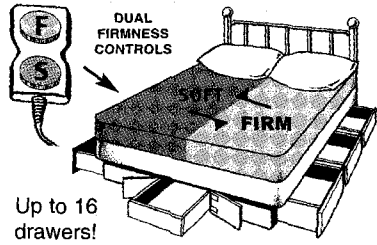
Crosby was quietly, definitively bitten by the performing bug at age fourteen, when Al Jolson (billed as “The World's Greatest Entertainer”) made a high-voltage appearance in Spokane. “I hung on every word and watched every move he made,” Crosby later recalled. Over the next few years he appeared in a string of high school and college productions—often, like his idol, in blackface, inaugurating a lifelong attachment to burnt cork. He also took up the drums, which led to a partnership with another restless local, Al Rinker. As a vocal duo they snagged a regular curtain-raising gig at a Spokane movie theater, representing, in Giddins's words, “Jazz Age bravura in an unthreatening incarnation.” And it was in Rinker's company that Crosby left town in a Model T, on October 15, 1925, to seek his fortune in Los Angeles.

Once they arrived, Crosby's transformation from vocalizing rube to na-

**BING CROSBY:
A POCKETFUL OF DREAMS—
THE EARLY YEARS,
1903–1940**

by Gary Giddins

Little, Brown
736 pages, \$30.00



DUAL FIRMNESS CONTROLS

Up to 16 drawers!

PUT A DRESSER UNDER ANY BED!

Anderson ULTIMATE BED™

Features space saving, solid wood, top quality, underbed dressers, side tables (optional), lighted headboard (optional), and an air mattress featuring dual firmness controls and a 3" visco elastic foam layer. Sleeping comfort is guaranteed! Wool filled mattress top is dustmite proof, antibacterial treated, and machine washable. Mattress and underbed dresser can be purchased separately for use with your existing bed! 30 day home trial. Ships UPS. Call 1-800-782-4825

FREE CAT. #46 **800-782-4825**
www.ultimatebed.com

Experience Books You Don't Have Time to Read

THE UNRULY LIFE OF WOODY ALLEN

Listen to Blackstone audio books on cassette and CD while you commute, cook, clean, exercise—whenever you want to do more with your time. Thousands of titles in all categories—bestsellers to classics. Ask for our FREE catalog complete with a \$6.00 off coupon inside. Authors such as MARION MEAL, O'Rourke, Wiesel, Bellow, Wolfe, Buckley, Wodehouse, Greene, Kafka, many more.

1-800-729-2665
www.blackstoneaudio.com

BLACKSTONE AUDIOBOOKS
RECORDINGS THAT INSPIRE, EDUCATE, ENTERTAIN

Comfortable ROCKERS
CHAIRS • SOFAS • RECLINERS

Beautiful furniture for spaces you live and work in

Free Catalog
(800) 451-7247
www.kleindesign.com

Adjustable lumbar support

Klein Design Inc. 99 Sachler St., Gloucester, MA 01930

brigger® FURNITURE MADE TO FIT YOUR BODY

tional icon took place at a rapid clip. After a short stint in vaudeville the duo was picked up by Paul Whiteman, whose stiff and starchy brand of orchestral jazz had made him a major celebrity. ("The tall, egg-shaped Whiteman," Giddins writes, "was the darling of the media—he could make news by announcing his latest plan for a diet.") Two years after Crosby left Spokane, his voice adorned such hit records as "My Blue Heaven" and "Ol' Man River." By 1930 he had left Whiteman's elephantine arrangements behind and struck out on his own, swiftly establishing himself as a music, film, and radio star. His domination of all three industries engendered the kind of synergistic triumphs that current media moguls can only dream of. To take just one example: in 1937 Crosby's "Sweet Leilani" became the most popular recording since the Crash, spending six months on the charts and earning the singer his first gold record. Meanwhile, the song he performed in *Waikiki Wedding* (itself a whopping success at the box office) won an Oscar—and helped to sell an astonishing 54 million units of sheet music. By just about any measure the Groaner, as Crosby styled himself, had triumphed.

How? The answer is a complicated one, but Giddins—whose gift for juggling biography, history, and musical microscopy won him the 1998 National Book Critics Circle Award for *Visions of Jazz*—is the ideal man to formulate it. As he sees it, two factors helped propel Crosby to the top of the cultural heap. To begin with, there was his vocal style, particularly as it was shaped by that gravel-voiced wonder Louis Armstrong. During Crosby's tenure with Whiteman he had been exposed to plenty of crack jazz players, and Bix Beiderbecke—with whom he roomed and not infrequently roistered—left his imprint on the young singer. But it was Armstrong who did the most in the twenties to liberate American music from its fin-de-siècle stodginess, cheerfully discarding its rhythmic and harmonic shackles. And it was from that same genius, first encountered during a 1926 visit to Chica-

go, that Crosby's voice acquired the elusive yet unmistakable sense of forward momentum known as swing. As Giddins sees it, Crosby was the first white singer truly to absorb these innovations, and he was never shy about acknowledging his debt, calling Armstrong "the beginning and the end of music in America."

Was Crosby therefore the only begetter of blue-eyed soul? Not exactly. For all his infatuation with blackface, he was too shrewd and individual an artist to function as a copycat. Instead he assimilated Armstrong's rhythmic propulsion and melodic ingenuity into his own, cooler sensibility, inspiring the master's admiration in the process. "Ever since Bing first opened his mouth," Armstrong wrote circa 1967, "he was the *Boss of All Singers* and Still is." The two performed together many times, and it is always instructive to compare their styles: in a 1936 recording of "Pennies From Heaven," for example, Armstrong sings the first, ebullient chorus, adding bluesy interjections and biting off his phrases, whereas Crosby glides suavely between his upper and lower registers and hits each note on the nose without ever breaking a sweat. Giddins gets it exactly right when he insists,

[Crosby] did not imitate Armstrong; he understood that Louis's message was to be yourself. That meant not simulating a black aesthetic but applying it to who he was and what he knew as a Northwestern third-generation Anglo-Irish Catholic, reared on John McCormack and Al Jolson, Dixieland and dance music, elocution and minstrelsy, comedy and vaudeville.

Nor did Crosby's achievement end with a canny reconciliation of black and white aesthetics. Enveloping the whole package in his lyrical, listener-friendly baritone, he brought the eros and elasticity of jazz to an enormous mainstream audience—and did so at a time when such crossover moves were virtually unheard of. In this context a 1992 comment by Artie Shaw makes perfect sense: "The thing you have to understand about Bing Crosby is that he was the first hip white person born in the United States." True enough. And by tailoring his hipster appeal for

the masses, he accumulated a staggering string of successes, including more No. 1 hits than either the Beatles or Elvis; multiple Academy Award nominations and an Oscar for his role in *Going My Way*; and an audience of 50 million for his weekly broadcasts of the *Kraft Music Hall*—not to mention the most popular recording in history, “White Christmas,” which is about the closest we Americans have come to a secular hymn. Crosby’s sphere of influence also extends far beyond his curriculum vitae: every major male pop singer who followed in his wake had to come to terms with his example. Frank Sinatra turned himself into a kind of anti-Bing, substituting a highly emotive style for the older man’s smiling reserve, but not even the anxiety of influence could steer him clear of that legato phrasing. And the next iconic male figure in popular music wore Crosby’s imprimatur on his gold-lamé sleeve. With his patented leer and Deep South inflections, Elvis would seem to be his predecessor’s polar opposite, yet the trademarks of Presley’s mature style—the swooping, ardent low notes, the shimmery upper register—are strikingly apparent in the very first recording Crosby made for Brunswick in 1931, “Out of Nowhere.” And surely it’s no accident that Elvis chose to jump-start his post-Army career with a cover version of “Blue Hawaii,” a hit for Crosby nearly twenty-five years before. If he couldn’t inherit Crosby’s mantle, he was willing to settle for his lei.

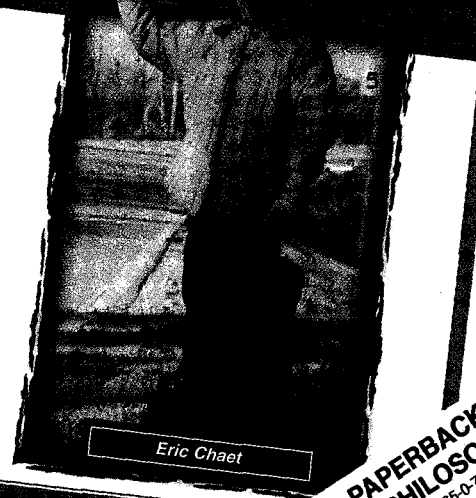
And for his way with a microphone. In Giddins’s view, the development of electronic amplification in the mid-1920s was the other significant factor in Crosby’s ascent, because it ensured that loudness was no longer quite so close to godliness: “According to an old theatrical shibboleth, an entertainer who could not project to the balcony’s last row was not ready for the big time.” An entire generation of belters was swiftly put out to pasture. And nobody used this shiny new technology with more finesse than Crosby, who “collaborated with the electric current as if he were romancing a woman.” Giddins writes, “With the microphone

Eric Chaet is the
Turnaround Artist.

Turnaround Artist
Productions
1803 County ZZ,
DePere, WI 54115
echaet@gbonline.com

A turnaround artist
reverses a failing
firm’s path. The intent
is to do likewise,
for humanity.

PEOPLE I MET HITCHHIKING ON USA HIGHWAYS



192 PP. PAPERBACK \$15
FICTION/PHILOSOPHY
ISBN 0-9706965-0-7

ENERGY-SAVING SUNPORCH® CONVERTIBLE SUNSPACE®



MOUNTS
READILY ON
DECKS, PATIOS,
OR LANDSCAPE
TIES

SunPorch® Structures, Inc.
P.O. Box 368, Dept. ATL
Westport, CT 06881-0368

☐ **YES** I enclose \$2. Please send complete
details, Color Catalog & Prices.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

INSULATED WINTER SUNROOM CONVERTS TO A SUMMER SCREEN ROOM!

Full Top-To-Bottom Wall Area Screens!

- ☐ QWIK® window/screen change system ☐ Do-it-yourself kit, no contractors needed ☐ Meets building codes for snow & wind loads ☐ Unique Climate Control System
- ☐ No extras, comes complete ☐ Buy factory direct & save ☐ America's #1 value since 1974.

FOR MORE INFO & BONUS OFFER:

MAIL
COUPON
WITH \$2.

WEB SITE
www.sunporch.com
(Bonus Code: ATL)



SunPorch® Structures Inc.
P.O. Box 368, Dept. ATL
Westport, CT 06881-0368

Jesus was all about **authority** and wherein it lies. His followers, with Jewish tradition and post-Easter perspective, fashioned stories of his life in which he looks to God as the ultimate authority and recognizes, too, the authority of societies' "Caesars." This Biblical picture is not what the *best* source for an authentic historical Jesus suggests. It is the *Gospel of Thomas*, discovered in 1945, and plausibly a student's on-the-spot notes of things Jesus said that puzzled him. Analysis by Jack Hannah in *You Will Not Taste Death—Jesus and Epicureanism* provides all 113 notes, places them in a historical narrative, and comments. They are puzzling because they are antithetical to Judaism; in fact Jesus was using principles from the very philosophy that Jews most despised: Epicureanism. Its concept of how corporeal, immortal, heavenly beings come into existence is reflected in Jesus' concept of how human personality survives death. Also it shaped Jesus' thought that God and Caesar are man-made authorities. An individual should be his/her own ultimate authority, and gender disappears. Of course, this radicalizes ethics. Hannah's findings challenge the academic presupposition that Jesus taught within the theistic and messianic bounds of Judaism. This seminal 321 page paperback is \$12 postpaid. Please order by check from:

Frank Publishing, 1816 Springmill Road
Mansfield, OH 44903-8907

<http://bookwire.bowker.com/bookinfo/title.aspx?20690>

Come see why
THE ATLANTIC ONLINE
is a three-time finalist for
the National Magazine Award for
General Excellence in New Media,
and why *Forbes* magazine named it
the best literary site on
the Web for 2000.

THE Atlantic
online

WWW.THEATLANTIC.COM

WOOD CLASSICS



PRECISION-CUT KITS *free catalog*
OR FULLY ASSEMBLED

The finest, solid teak garden furniture
available anywhere.
Our teak is of the highest quality and
comes with a lifetime guarantee.

845-255-5651
Box 101AM0210 Gardiner, NY 12525 www.woodclassics.com

AFRICA • CHINA • INDIA • JAPAN • NEPAL
Since 1989 **UPTON**
TEA IMPORTS
Purveyor of the World's Finest Teas
1-800-234-8327 Free catalog listing
www.uptontea.com over 320 varieties of
garden-fresh, loose tea
231 South St. * Hopkinton, MA 01748

elaborating the subtleties of his delivery, Bing was reinventing popular music as a personal and consequently erotic medium."

This kind of formulation—knowing, nervy, and (to use a much maligned word) judgmental—is Giddins's stock-in-trade. Indeed, the only weak patches in *A Pocketful of Dreams* occur in the first hundred pages or so, when Crosby hasn't yet begun his career and there's nothing to be judgmental about. Delivering his history of greater Spokane, the author sometimes lapses into what reads like a superior chamber-of-commerce brochure. But everywhere else he displays his phenomenal smarts and critical acumen, and both qualities get a workout as the book eases into the mid-1930s.

It was at this point that America's most popular singer began to soft-pedal his jazz pedigree and to move very consciously toward a mushier middle ground. Much of the impetus came from Jack Kapp, the owner of the Decca record company, who signed Crosby in 1934. At once this impresario spurred his star toward what Giddins calls "common-denominator aesthetics," meaning plummy ballads, light opera, choral music, Christmas carols, cowboy songs, Hawaiian ditties, and one-shot novelties of every stripe. Now, Crosby was the last person to balk at singing such an ecumenical repertoire. And history—at least the history of commerce—proved Kapp right, as Crosby went on to rule the charts for another two decades. Still, listening to some of the junk that emanated from what the author elsewhere calls "the Decca plantation," it's hard not to wonder whether Crosby wasn't ultimately a little too amenable, and too heedless of his own talents.

Here, though, Giddins dismisses any notion of the singer as a sellout. Yes, Kapp labored to transform him into a "smoother, less mannered, ultimately less expressive singer, a kind of musical comfort food." But this, Giddins argues, is exactly what allowed Crosby to reinvent himself for decades on end.

The erstwhile symbol of Prohibition and now the Depression would be reborn yet a third time as an unchal-

lenged icon of World War II and a fourth time as the gladdening troubadour in an age of postwar paranoia (his peak years) and a fifth time as the avuncular skipper of the affluent 1950s. Had Bing not leveled his style, the mainstream would likely have left him behind, a Dixieland dinosaur bewildered by changing times and not the show-business titan who enjoyed an additional twenty years at the epicenter of American tastes and attitudes.

Only with the arrival of rock-and-roll did Crosby lose his grip on the national imagination. By the end of the 1960s he was an object of nostalgia or (depending on one's age) derision, a smooth-talking old trout selling orange juice on television. And to judge from a few simple benchmarks, his influence has continued to wane. In my local, profusely stocked Tower Records, Crosby gets less shelf space than his cardigan-sporting epigone Perry Como—less, even, than his underachieving kid brother Bob. The *Road* movies, once staples of late-night television, seem to have pulled a similar disappearing act. Has cultural amnesia done Crosby in for good?

To my own surprise, Giddins has made me doubt it. Thanks to Crosby's penchant for understatement and precision-tooled drollery, his best work has hardly aged a day, and even the worst of the Decca crapola is still ennobled by his perfect intonation and no-muss, no-fuss phrasing. What's more, his influence remains pervasive, even if it's not always visible. During his thirty-odd years in the public eye (and the public ear) Crosby came to embody for many what an American was supposed to be: decent but a trifle distant, good-humored and democratic and unflappable. And that persona has proved no less durable than his art, which should guarantee Crosby's survival well into the new millennium. Certainly it's hard to think otherwise after reading *A Pocketful of Dreams*. A formidable biographer and exegetical wonder, Gary Giddins is so persuasive that even the most skeptical post-Boomer should close this book with the eerie sensation that it's Bing's world after all—we just live in it. ■

THE MORE YOU VISIT, THE MORE IT FEELS LIKE HOME.

BUY AND
DOWNLOAD INSTANTLY
OR BUY AND HAVE
SHIPPED IN 48 HOURS

MAGAZINES

BOOKS

E-BOOKS

ARCHIVES

NEWSLETTERS

STUDY
GUIDES

DISSERTATIONS

HARD
-TO-
FIND
BOOKS

SCREENPLAYS

LEGAL
DOCS.

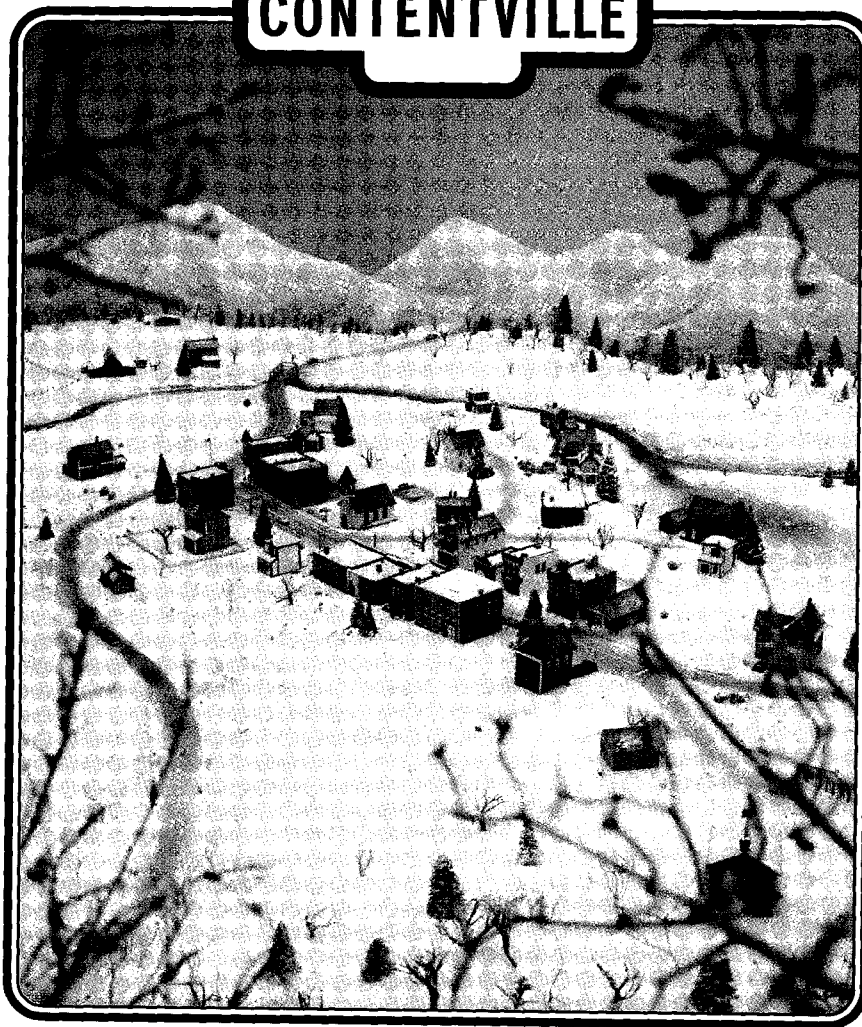
SPEECHES

TRANSCRIPTS

FREE

AUTHOR
INTERVIEWS
CHAPTER ONES
ADVICE FROM
INDEPENDENT
BOOKSELLERS

CONTENTVILLE



A home to your interests, pastimes,
and favorite things to read.

A place where you can explore a world of ideas
and enjoy great content at great prices.



www.CONTENTVILLE.com

OFF ITS ROCKER

Dame Muriel's surreal meditation on belief

BY THOMAS MALLON

.....

If you spent any time in England in the middle or late 1970s, you remember the criminal Lord Lucan as a great two-for-one figure in the popular imagination—a British amalgam of Dr. Sam Sheppard and D. B. Cooper. A good-looking thirty-nine-year-old moustachioed aristocrat (the sort of wastrel clubman that, one imagined, had been extinct for decades), Lucan in the fall of 1974 attempted to bludgeon his estranged wife to death in the basement of 46 Lower

Belgrave Street, in London. But it was dark, and he mistook the children's nanny for Lady Lucan. He ended up killing the nanny, Sandra Rivett (he stashed her body in a mailbag), and giving his wife only some nasty wounds, from which she recovered sufficiently to finger him. Aided, it is thought, by his upper-crust friends, Lucan proceeded to disappear as tantalizingly as if, like our own Cooper, he had jumped out of a plane. Over the years until 1999, when he was pronounced legally dead, sightings of him were as frequent as they were (probably) false.

Readers of Muriel Spark's brilliant, addled novels—deceptive, dark little comedies that eventually veer off into bizarre supernaturalness—will not be surprised to learn that in her latest book she goes so far as to combine the Lucan story with the also real, if less famous, story of a “fake stigmatic.” This is the sort of gaudy irreligiosity the eminent Catholic novelist has forever stuffed, along with nuns and miracles and murders, into her books. Spark's subject is always, ultimately, man's place in a world that God is entitled to treat as a funhouse. But for the duration of her typically slender novels she plays God—in this case combining the Lucan murder and the sham stigmata the way that a whimsical deity might decide to create water and then land just to see what would happen.

Spark's bleeding charlatan is Beate Pappenheim, a poor student and salesgirl from Germany who, in the same decade Lucan tries to murder his wife, comes up with the idea of faking wounds like Jesus Christ's with her menstrual blood. Her supposed ability to perform miracles turns her “into a real cult,” complete with the arrival of credulous pilgrims at her bedside. (When she is finally exposed, “more money in Irish currency than any

other [is] found to have been placed to her account.”) By the time the main action of *Aiding and Abetting* begins, Beate has transformed herself into a Parisian psychiatrist, Dr. Hildegard Wolf, to whose consulting room comes a man claiming to be Lord Lucan. This being a Muriel Spark novel, he has, of course, been referred to Wolf by a priest. Again, this being a Spark novel, the book cannot content itself with such complexity but must double Lucan with a second man also claiming to be the murdering lord and now trying to blackmail Wolf with her past as Fräulein Pappenheim.

Like numerous books of the Bible, Dame Muriel's novels frequently defy belief. Her longtime readers will remember the mysterious voice calling up the geriatrics in *Memento Mori*, the Watergate-style bugging of the convent in *The Abbess of Crewe*. Even so, like the Bible, Spark's novels are designed to bring you to belief, if only by making you wonder, with a certain nervous gaiety, just Who might be behind the fiendish tangles of the world.

For all her fakery, Beate/Hildegard takes the reality of hell quite seriously. Here she considers the visit paid her by Lucky, one of the Lucan claimants,

what, she wondered, did Lucky mean by a pact with the Devil? ... Whether he was the real Lord Lucan or not, Hildegard felt he was referring to

something genuinely in his past. She would not be at all surprised to find that, as the missing Earl, he was a fake; but she would be astonished if he had not at some earlier time compromised his conscience: “I sold my soul to the Devil.” That must mean something.

What Hildegard and the likely Lucan have most in common is blood. They've both been drenched in it, and even if the immersion was achieved by fraud or violence, who knows what transfigurative powers it might possess? Hildegard is “consoled” by the possibility that at least one of the Lucans may be a religious maniac, and her boyfriend's speculative journal quotes Shakespeare's Sonnet 111 while pondering how the putative lord might have dissolved into the element he unleashed.

As the years piled up with nothing achieved but his furtive travels ... what had he become? Someone untraceable with blood on his hands, in his head, in his memory. Blood ...

... My nature is subdued
to what it works in,
like the dyer's hand.

Spark has never been afraid to joke about anything (she perceives God as having, after all, the most perverse sense of humor), and she has great fun pointing out, repeatedly, how much Lucky loves eating lamb. She is also clearly attracted by the idea of Lucan's having been declared dead without the evidence of a corpse. Her novel is animated by the possibility that he continues to walk the treadmill of an earthly purgatory—waiting, perhaps expiating, anticipating definitive punishment or eventual reward. “The nature of belief,” the narrator says, “is very strange.” Phony Hildegard may be, but the stigmatic-turned-shrink still believes she managed to cure certain of her devotees.

Spark is now the sole survivor among the big three Catholic novelists of postwar England. Her religious vision has always seemed the oddest, and perhaps the most authentic, in the trinity. Graham Greene was more interested in sucking up to earthly tyrants than in worshipping the ultimate powers that be, and Evelyn Waugh's professions of

faith had a political dimension too, albeit one opposite to Greene's. Spark has never had much interest in politics; even Jean Brodie's attraction to Mussolini was more a function of the schoolmistress's passionate prime than anything of ideological importance.

Lucan's disappearance, we're told by one character, "partakes of the realistic-surrealistic." This has for so long been Spark's territory that one wonders why it took her all this time to get around to the vanished earl. Still, for all his suitability, and for all her deliberate, characteristic lurches between the real and the surreal, *Aiding and Abetting* does feel more than necessarily disjointed. Hildegard gets lost as the reader is dispatched on a merry chase after Lucan with the daughter of someone from his former circle. Spark eventually manages to bring the plot lines back together, but the unity is less than

complete. And yet cleverness and high style remain abundant here ("She glared at him but he smiled at her as he rose, suave, casually dressed, rich, manicured, simply awful"), and the book's ending employs a particularly Waugh-like twist that is no less satisfying for being familiar.

Now eighty-three, Muriel Spark is among a select group of aged but still productive famous novelists. The twilight works of this pantheon are bound to be of mixed quality—and ripe for exploitation by publishers seeking to prolong the life of reliable old product lines. The books we'll be seeing from this group won't all be up to the last of Penelope Fitzgerald's, or even Saul Bellow's. But the typical Spark novel has always been stimulatingly off its rocker, and on the strength of *Aiding and Abetting*, there's yet no need to start persuading Dame Muriel into hers. **A**

BOOKS

NEW & NOTEWORTHY

*Longfellow's knack of permanence,
Genovese's monumental achievement, and four new novels*

This book is like Valentine's Day chocolate from an old flame: one doesn't know whether to savor it lovingly or to x-ray it instead. But to those with the gizzard for it, Julian Barnes's lancet wit will go down as smooth as butterscotch. *Love, etc.*, a continuation of his novel *Talking It Over*, reaches us through the voices of three major and several minor characters. The three principals address the reader for anywhere from a sentence to a couple of pages at a time, continuously deepening and frequently overturning our understanding of events. In this respect *Love, etc.* resembles a stupendously well-written episode of *Once and Again*, except that, refreshingly, all the characters lie to us and dislike one another. "Truth will out, old bean,

**LOVE,
etc.**

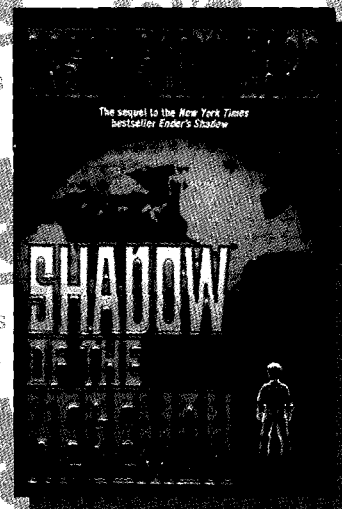
JULIAN BARNES

LOVE, ETC.
by Julian Barnes
Knopf, 240 pages
\$23.00

eh?," one of the protagonists muses, before deciding that in fact "truth mostly does not out ... it mostly ins." Or, as Barnes wrote in *Flaubert's Parrot*, "What happened to the truth is not recorded." Barnes is probably good and sick of hearing about *Flaubert's Parrot*, as if he hadn't written nineteen, now—other highly regarded novels and collections. For all its perverse pleasures, *Love, etc.* probably won't be elbowing *Flaubert* aside in the Barnes pantheon anytime soon, even if the new book does contain the surefire vocabulary builder "leveret cacks his scut" (the sort of line that makes one want to look up "his," just in case). Mordant and even suspenseful though it is, *Love, etc.* can't quite shake a certain reheatedness endemic to even the most free-standing of sequels—for which, as John Updike and Philip Roth have shown, a trilogy-making capstone is the only sure cure. May it come soon. —DAVID KIPEN

WHAT'S ON YOUR READING LIST?™

(Personal recommendations from your
independent booksellers with BOOK SENSE)



AIDAN ELLIOTT-MCCREA, BOOKSHOP SANTA CRUZ,
SANTA CRUZ, CALIFORNIA

"SHADOW tells the story of the time just after the Formic War: a complex struggle for world domination where the most important pawns are the child-geniuses who won the war.

A worthy sequel to ENDER'S GAME and ENDER'S SHADOW, and that's a tall order."

Tor hardcover now in stores.

Show your independence by visiting a bookstore with Book Sense and let a knowledgeable bookseller assist you in finding what you need. For an independent bookstore near you, call 1-888-BOOKSENSE

or visit

www.BookSense.com

BOOK

sense
Independent Bookstores
for Independent Minds

PERSONALITY

PASSION

KNOWLEDGE

COMMUNITY

CHARACTER

Some writers trumpet every trick. John Banville is of a higher order. His graceful and precise prose, laced with apt and exquisite metaphors, so perfectly conveys its meaning that it calls little attention to itself. The reader is struck more by the truth of what he says than by the cleverness with which he says it. This is not to suggest, however, that his words don't sing. Here, for instance, the narrator describes lying apprehensively awake just after the birth of his daughter: "Triangles of watery light from the headlamps of passing motor cars kept opening across the ceiling only to be folded smartly again and dropped, like so many ladies' fans, into the drawer where she was asleep."

Unfortunately, in *Eclipse* the superb writing has to carry the story pretty much alone. Banville has chosen an intellectually compelling idea in exploring the struggle of an actor who discovers that he has never realized himself. Alexander Cleave returns to his childhood home "to locate that singular essential self ... that must be in hiding, somewhere, under the jumble of discarded masks." But such a quest requires so much self-absorption that not even the most interesting ideas and extraordinary writing can save it from becoming tedious. Ghosts and dreams visit Cleave, as he works his way toward an enormous sorrow, but the reader longs for substance. Cleave tells his wife that he is content in his childhood home, because "it offers me a way of being alive without living"; and that, alas, is exactly how one feels inside this novel. —CHRISTINA SCHWARZ

In 1857 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, along with Harriet Beecher Stowe, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Oliver Wendell Holmes, John Greenleaf Whittier, James Russell Lowell, and other three-handled New England sages, founded *The Atlantic Monthly*. Our original mission was to free the slaves and bridge the chasm between the old culture of Europe and the new culture of



ECLIPSE
by John Banville
Knopf
224 pages, \$23.00

America: to import the old and export the new. Longfellow was one of the principal builders of that bridge. He read eleven languages, translated from most of them, and decked out American legends in the brocaded costumes of European verse, rendering *The Courtship of Miles Standish* and *Evangeline: A Tale of Acadie* in dactylic hexameter. He translated the entire *Divina Commedia* of Dante; took the rhythms of the Finnish epic *Kalevala* and retooled them for *The Song of Hiawatha*; converted the rhythms of Michael Drayton's "The Ballad of Agincourt" into an updated, blood-chilling narrative, "The Skeleton in Armor." He popularized an entire stable of international legends, and he shoehorned the American family into domesticated poetry in that pious precursor of Hallmark, "The Children's



HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW:
POEMS AND OTHER WRITINGS
edited by
J. D. McClatchy
Library of America
854 pages, \$35.00

Hour." More than any other poet, Longfellow furnished Americans with a template for what poetry was supposed to be: uplifting, patriotic, exotic, dramatic.

He also made our literature known. Longfellow was acquainted with every great European of the nineteenth century, from the Marquis de Lafayette to Oscar Wilde. He is memorialized in Westminster Abbey, in the Poets' Corner. He brought us together with our European heritage and made the world respect our poetry.

A price, however, was paid. Longfellow may have been a citizen of the world, who took tea with Queen Victoria, but he was also plainly a citizen of Cambridge and of Harvard. In his poetry he seldom enlarged reality in order to explode it—not as Emily Dickinson deepened the interior world, or as Walt Whitman broadened the exterior. But (one should never omit the "but" with Longfellow) he produced a huge amount of memorable verse, which has crept under the skin of our language and is likely to remain there. If poetry's function is to make sayings memorable, Longfellow, with his younger admirer

Robert Frost, surely possessed the unmistakable knack of permanence.

Chances are that more than a few bromides you utter originated with Longfellow. Indeed, they may have originated in one of the more than sixty poems he published in this magazine (several of which can be read on our Web site, at www.theatlantic.com/poetry). "The patter of little feet," "The mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small," "One, if by land, and two, if by sea," "This is the forest primeval," "Ships that pass in the night," "Shall fold their tents, like the Arabs, / and as silently steal away," are famously his; but so are "Into each life some rain must fall," "footprints on the sands of time," and "a boy's will is the wind's will," famous thanks to Frost. Longfellow's secret lay in his understanding of language, his modulation of the musical sounds in such lines as "While underneath these leafy tents they keep / The long, mysterious Exodus of Death," from "The Jewish Cemetery at Newport." We cannot help hearing the long *es* in the first line broaden into the short *es* in "exodus" and "death," as though a sob lapsed into silence.

In Longfellow's poetry the scale is always human. That is what makes his best work so touching—and his worst so soppy. The universe was not built on a human scale, and the greatest poets know it; but to make the American continent fit for nineteenth-century human habitation some sort of taming was necessary. Longfellow kept the wildness at bay. —PETER DAVISON

A festschrift—a collection of essays written in honor of a venerable, often geriatric, scholar—is nearly always a tome that only a graduate student could love. This one, however, is different—because its topic, slavery, has over the past forty years inspired more brilliant works of American history than any other, because its contributors are some of the most astute scholars exploring that subject, and above all because the man it honors, Eugene D. Genovese, is this country's greatest living historian. Taken together, the essays allow the general reader to grasp the extraordinary variety of approaches



**SLAVERY,
SECESSION,
AND SOUTHERN
HISTORY**

edited by Robert
Louis Paquette and
Louis A. Ferleger
University
Press of Virginia
229 pages
\$49.50/\$18.50

and disciplines—ranging from anthropology to theology to econometrics to literary criticism—through which historians have illuminated this complex and anguishing topic. And, along with a lengthy interview with the honoree, they help the layman to grasp Genovese's dazzling achievement. Exceptionally honest and tough-minded, Genovese emerges from this volume as a model intellectual, following the truth wherever it takes him, and for as long as necessary. For example, to fulfill his "lifelong ambition" to write a monumental study of southern slaveholders, he first had to learn everything he could about the slaves. In doing so, Genovese—then a Marxist and, in his own words, "an atheist, a materialist [and] a smart-assed New York intellectual"—was forced to recognize that Christianity was the central element of slave life; despite his biases, he therefore made it the focus of his study. This ten-year "detour" resulted in *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, the most penetrating work ever written about American slaves (his magnum opus, *The Mind of the Master Class*, written with his wife, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, nears completion). Among Genovese's most striking revelations is the intense and tangled relationship between masters and slaves. Resting on unlimited violence, American slavery commingled intimacy, affection, and dependency with hatred, brutality, and self-contempt. It was all the more terrible for its paradoxes and subtle moral entanglements. —BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

They take the *early bus*," Jesse Jackson said of his supporters in his two presidential campaigns of the 1980s. This sad and haunting novel is about the kinds of people riding that bus: telephone operators, baggage handlers, money counters at downtown banks, factory workers, waitresses. Stewart O'Nan's canvas is the inner lives of people who are often summed up by their outer lives, their jobs, the color of their

skin. The novel weaves in and out of the minds of the residents of one block in an African-American neighborhood of Pittsburgh that is cut off from the rest of the city by a new busway built to ferry suburbanites to their city offices. "From the busway they can't see the streets, only the walls rising on both sides, just the tip of a steeple." Beyond those walls the struggles of the Tolbert family, with love and obligation, with hope and the end of hope, give shape to a plot that does not wholly unspool until the last sentence—about the most dramatic and poignant I have ever read. —JACK BEATTY



**EVERYDAY
PEOPLE**
by Stewart O'Nan
Grove Press, 268
pages, \$24.00

Amitav Ghosh's fourth novel opens with the sweeping power characteristic of the best historical romances. It begins in nineteenth-century Burma, where a resourceful Indian street orphan falls in love with a beautiful nursemaid to the Burmese Queen. They eventually marry and start a family whose fate *The Glass Palace* carefully chronicles through world wars and imperial decay. Ghosh's narrative cools as he depicts the family's interwoven stories, his fervent opening chapters giving way to a more objective sensibility. The historical forces that served as the love story's lush background begin to overcome the characters. There is no denying Ghosh's command of culture and history: whether describing



**THE GLASS
PALACE**
by Amitav Ghosh
Random House
476 pages, \$25.95

court life in the nineteenth-century Burmese Glass Palace, where servants could approach royalty only on all fours, or limning a political speech by the contemporary Burmese opposition leader, whose laughter confounds her jailers, Ghosh proves a writer of supreme skill and intelligence. But this very precision tends to sap the emotional intensity promised in the novel's opening pages. —STEPHEN AMIDON

WHAT'S ON YOUR READING LIST?™

(Personal recommendations from your
independent booksellers with BOOK SENSE)



DANIEL GOLDIN, HARRY W. SCHWARTZ BOOKSHOPS,
MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

"When Hearon is in top form, watch out! This time, her quietly feisty heroine is the proverbial black sheep younger sister who is called back into the family after her perfect older sister dies in a mysterious plane crash. Hearon's writing is so distinctive that even a few paragraphs are a delightful experience."

Knopf hardcover now in stores.

Show your independence by visiting a bookstore
with Book Sense and let a knowledgeable
bookseller assist you in finding what you need.

For an independent bookstore near you, call

1-888-BOOKSENSE

or visit

www.BookSense.com



Independent Bookstores
for Independent Minds

PERSONALITY
PASSION
KNOWLEDGE
COMMUNITY
CHARACTER

A MAVERICK HISTORIAN

Rarely has comedy of manners been so artfully infused with pathos as in Evelyn Waugh's recently reissued Sword of Honour trilogy: "the finest work of fiction in English," our author argues, "to emerge from World War II"

BY PENELOPE LIVELY

.....

On October 6, 1940, Evelyn Waugh made an entry in his diary that will puzzle and dismay readers accustomed to the celebratory view of World War II presented in, say, Tom Brokaw's *The Greatest Generation*: "The most valuable thing is to stop the fighting and working part of the nation from thinking." The tone is of course ironic, and indeed, this passage is at odds with the bulk of Waugh's wartime diaries, which are stylistically immediate and purposeful, a narrative of what happened to Waugh—when, where, and how. But at this point he paused for some acid comment: "War will go on until it is clear to thinking observers that neither side can hope for victory in any terms approximating to the hopes with which they started. Fighting troops are not thinking observers." Hence the need, according to Waugh, for those in command to make sure that subordinates had neither the time nor the inclination to ponder their circumstances.

Waugh's war diaries are a cynical, sometimes gleeful chronicle of muddle. They are also the raw material from which would spring his most powerful and telling fiction. The recently reissued *Sword of Honour* trilogy, consisting of *Men at Arms*, *Officers and Gentlemen*, and *The End of the Battle*, was originally published from 1952 to 1961. Waugh was by then an established novelist, known for such stringent satires as *Vile Bodies*, *Black Mischief*, and his other work of the 1930s, and for *Brideshead Revisited*—all of which are far better known in the United States than *Sword of Honour*, his masterpiece. As they were published, the works making up

this new opus struck a different chord: the satire was there, the irony, the caustic wit, but laced now with an elegiac melancholy. Waugh recognized that World War II was the great watershed for twentieth-century Britain. He was profoundly mistrustful of the society emerging after the war, and lamented what he saw as the passing of the aristocracy's traditional values and the ascendancy of what would come to be called the meritocracy. *Sword of Honour* is an extended fictional discussion of

THE SWORD OF HONOUR TRILOGY

by Evelyn Waugh

Back Bay Books/
Little, Brown

MEN AT ARMS
342 pages, \$13.95

OFFICERS AND GENTLEMEN
339 pages, \$13.95

THE END OF THE BATTLE
319 pages, \$13.95

morality and incipient social change expressed through a gallery of vivid characters who reflect the chaos of war.

The central figure is Guy Crouchback, the son of one of those ancient English Catholic families for whom the sixteenth century has only just happened. The three novels follow his wartime career and adventures from West Africa to Yugoslavia to Crete to London's clubland—a progression that almost precisely mirrors Waugh's own. But the ascetic, troubled Guy is hardly Waugh, who was using his own experiences as inspiration for an opinionated and savagely satiric meditation.

The war calls the tune throughout the trilogy. Its convolutions move the main characters around like pieces on a chessboard and enable Waugh to manipulate a large cast with marvelous dexterity, whisking satellite figures out of sight and then producing them with a flourish when the reader has almost forgotten their existence. The picture of army life is one of anarchy and opportunism, the daily triumph of expedient behavior. A central thread is the career of the dreadful Trimmer, an arriviste

hairdresser who first appears as Guy's fellow trainee and subsequently turns up having engineered his own promotion to high rank through a combination of luck and chutzpah. Personal negotiation and the fortunes of war are inextricably intertwined. In Crete the chaotic and catastrophic evacuation of British forces is an occasion for the miserable disintegration of a seemingly noble officer to be set against the sinister progress of a soldier intent on saving his own skin at all costs.

The war episodes have their own rhythm, as does the common wartime experience: long spells of boredom punctuated by passages of terror. Waugh varies the broader rhythm within the novels as well, alternating periods of hectic military activity with dips into civilian life to expand his commentary on the society of the day—primarily that of his own world, the masonic enclave of the upper middle class spilling over into the chic bohemia of the literary scene. A lurid event in West Africa, in which the one-eyed Brigadier Ritchie-Hook, one of Waugh's most enduring creations, returns from a reconnaissance patrol clutching the dripping head of an African sentry, contrasts with interludes in which Guy consorts with old friends and tries to persuade his ex-wife, Virginia, to sleep with him at Claridge's.

Guy's is a cloistered world of privilege, based on the certainties of the pre-war British class system and fortified by economic circumstances. The army into which he is flung mimics that society, but with the rug pulled from under its feet. The hierarchies are still there, the pecking orders, the assumptions about rank and entitlement. But the vagaries of war mean that all this can be undermined and eroded. The proletarian Trimmer owes his advancement in part to a public-relations exercise with the United States, which makes it expedient to field him as "the new officer which is emerging from the old hidebound British Army." Though deeply satiric, Waugh's earlier novels were nonetheless sympathetic toward the hedonistic world he knew. *Sword of Honour* continues in this vein somewhat, with characters suited to previ-

ously established themes. (Mrs. Stitch, who was famously based on the society beauty Lady Diana Cooper, first appeared in *Scoop* [1938] and trips in and out of the wartime series as well.) But here Waugh trained his lens primarily on a doomed system—those charmed lives and that unquestioned privilege in the cataclysm of war and the social upheaval it generated.

Waugh was not, of course, without *partis pris*. His particular pieties, and his fierce adherence to that world of privilege, may seem archaic or even incredible today, but his intent was to bear witness to a time and to a society. Other novelists might have put a different spin on that scene, but Waugh was the master of the very English kind of fiction—practiced by Anthony Powell, Kingsley Amis, William Cooper, and, in a subsequent generation, Malcolm Bradbury and David Lodge—that discusses serious matters with a light touch.

Thus Trimmer is essentially a ludicrous figure—brash, amoral, and impervious to the opinions of others. The scenes in which he appears are always tours de force of ironic exchange, as he pursues his own ends despite the amused contempt of Guy or Virginia, for whom Trimmer develops an unlikely passion. But there is a grim inevitability about Trimmer's rise; he is the symbol of that very victory of another order which Waugh feared and anticipated, the rise of the meritocracy that was taking place in postwar Britain as he wrote the trilogy. Trimmer enabled Waugh to have fictional fun and display his dazzling gifts for characterization, but he is also the embodiment of themes at the heart of the trilogy: change and decay, the victory of cleverness over integrity. In a final twist, Virginia and Guy remarry, but the son Virginia bears—the Crouchback heir—is Trimmer's child.

This use of social comedy to make succinct points about morality or about a particular climate of opinion gives Waugh's writing its edge. When Waugh served up a character like Ritchie-Hook, who has the mental outlook of an aggressive schoolboy, a penchant for practical jokes, and a single-mind-

Learn Another Language on Your Own!



Learn to speak a foreign language fluently on your own and at your own pace with what are considered the finest in-depth courses available. Many were developed by U.S. Department of State for diplomatic personnel who must learn a language quickly and thoroughly. Emphasis is on learning to speak and to understand the spoken language. A typical course (equivalent to a college semester) includes an album of 10 to 12 audio cassettes (10 to 18 hours), recorded by native-born speakers, plus a 250-page textbook. Some of our courses:

☐ Albanian \$135	☐ German I \$185	☐ Norwegian \$135	☐ Swahili \$155
☐ Arabic, Saudi \$185	☐ German II \$155	☐ Persian \$185	☐ Swedish \$225
☐ Egyptian \$185	☐ Greek \$185	☐ Polish \$195	☐ Tagalog \$325
☐ Moroccan \$245	☐ Hebrew \$255	☐ Portuguese, \$225	☐ Thai \$225
☐ Bulgarian \$265	☐ Hindi \$145	☐ Brazilian \$225	☐ Turkish \$225
☐ Cantonese \$225	☐ Hungarian \$225	☐ European \$155	☐ Ukrainian \$225
☐ Catalan \$225	☐ Italian \$185	☐ Romanian \$135	☐ Urdu \$195
☐ Czech \$155	☐ Japanese \$185	☐ Russian \$255	☐ Vietnamese \$245
☐ Danish \$155	☐ Korean \$225	☐ Serbo-Croatian \$225	
☐ Dutch \$155	☐ Lakota \$185	☐ Shona \$225	
☐ Estonian \$295	☐ Latin \$160	☐ Slovak \$225	
☐ Finnish \$225	☐ Latvian \$225	☐ Spanish, European \$125	
☐ French I \$185	☐ Lithuanian \$165	☐ Latin American I \$185	
☐ French II \$215	☐ Mandarin \$185	☐ Latin American II \$165	

Brief courses:

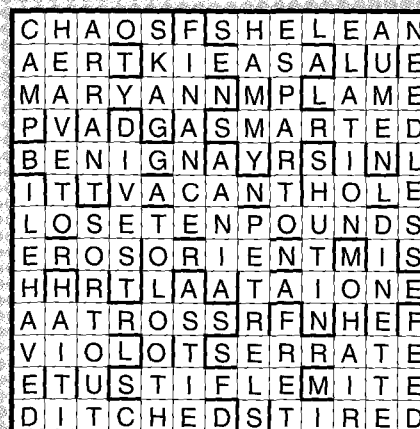
- ☐ Azerbaijani, \$55
- ☐ Indonesian, \$55
- ☐ Kurdish, \$45
- ☐ Scots Gaelic, \$90
- ☐ Tibetan, \$40

You can order now with a full 3-week money-back guarantee. To order call toll-free 1-800-243-1234, toll-free fax 1-888-453-4329, (203) 453-9794, e-mail: RQ103@audioforum.com, or mail check or money order. Ask for our FREE 52-page *Whole World Language Catalog* with courses in 103 languages. Our 29th year.

AUDIO-FORUM®
THE LANGUAGE SOURCE

Room Q103, 96 Broad St.,
Guilford, CT 06437-2612

ANSWERS TO THE JANUARY PUZZLER



"Resolution"

Ten "pounds," in the form of the letters LB, were lost, thus keeping the resolution. Across: 1. CHA(O)S (cash anag.) 6. SHE + LL BEAN 12. AL(B)ERT 13. K(I + ELBA)SA (ask rev.) 14. MA(RYAN)N 15. LAME (double def.) 17. SMARTED (rev.) 18. BENI(C)N 22. VA(CAN)T 23. HOLE (homophone) 29. (h)ERO'S 30. O + R(I)ENT 34. TAILBONE (anag.) 35. ALBATROSS (anag.) 38. VIOL (homophone) 39. SE(R + RAT)E 40. STIFLE (anag.) 41. MITE (homophone) 42. D + ITCHED 43. TI(R)ED. Down: 1. CAM + P 2. HE + A + VE TO 3. AR(RAN)T 4. S(K)AG 5. FI(N)ANCE 7. (w)HAMMY 8. ESPARTO (anag.) 9. E + L(AT)ION 10. AL(B)UME + N 11. NEEDLES + S 16. DIVES + T 19. AL(BAN)IA 20. S(HUT)-IN 21. FLL-BE + HAVE + D 25. S(OR)T OUT 26. TO(L + L) BOOT + H 27. PET(RE)LS (slept anag.) 28. DINETTE (homophone of dye Net) 31. M(OH + AIR 32. H(A)IT + I 33. ASTILBE (anag.) 36. FRET (double def.) 37. FEE + D

ed devotion to violence ("I'd like to hear less about denying things to the enemy and more about biffing him"), he was also pointing up the way in which the artificial community that is an army allows such exaggerated figures to break cover.

The concept of honor is not labored but subtly wound into the apposition of characters and conduct. The sword in question is the Sword of Stalingrad, made by order of King George VI as a gift to "the steel-hearted people of Stalingrad" and solemnly displayed in Westminster Abbey in 1943; but Waugh, of course, presented this public celebration of "the triumphs of 'Joe' Stalin" with cynicism. For his purposes honor resided in moral integrity and was epitomized by Guy's elderly father, a deeply committed Catholic whose quiet decency serves as a foil to the self-serving opportunism displayed by others. The scheming of two hotel proprietors, a couple seizing on the money-making possibilities offered by the wartime shortage of accommodations, is contrasted with Mr. Crouchback's self-denial and generosity: "Somehow his mind seems to work different than yours and mine," the husband remarks, oblivious to the irony.

Mr. Crouchback's conservatism is the old-fashioned ethic of noblesse oblige. Guy's brother-in-law, Arthur Box Bender, symbolizes the new Tory: he is unlikely to oblige anyone unless it serves a useful purpose or is politically expedient. The subject of politics is not addressed, *per se*, in the trilogy, but the political changes of the day inform Waugh's story. Waugh wrote these novels after the Labour election victory of 1945. It was perhaps because the votes of ex-servicemen were instrumental in sweeping Labour into power that he focused on the socially upending nature of the army. To Waugh's jaundiced eye, a legion of Trimmers was on the move in postwar Britain. The opening up of British society—by way of educational opportunity, above all—meant that a cast-iron system of privilege was

now dismayingly porous. Anyone could become anything, and soon would.

The practical effects of socialism, and the horrors thereof, were a favored middle-class topic of discussion in the late 1940s. I was growing up then, and as a child of the times, I wondered why everyone behaved as though having to wash our own dishes were equivalent to a sentence of penal servitude. But Waugh's disgruntled perception of postwar Britain went beyond outrage at domestic inconvenience. The welfare state and equality of opportunity seem to have represented for Waugh the death blow to all that he considered sacred: the certainties of hierarchy, the entrenchment of certain standards. Waugh's was a perverse vision, and to anyone of liberal tendencies—indeed, to any democratically minded person—distinctly off-putting, but his genius lay in making this vision beguiling.

Fifty years ago British society was polarized in a way that is hard to conceive of now: there were two nations, in terms of how people lived and of how they perceived one another. Waugh evoked that vanishing world and nailed its assumptions, its prejudices, its mysterious fault lines, with everything that his characters say and do. The coterie at Guy's London club subtly derides the air marshal who aspires to membership: he is not of proper birth. Fellow officers in Guy's training corps are elegantly defined by their speech and behavior: one knows immediately from which stratum of society they come. The circles of society were Waugh's stamping grounds; he knew that world intimately, he was in tune with it, he was sympathetic to it—but his close identification manifested itself in fictional treatments that were pungently ironic.

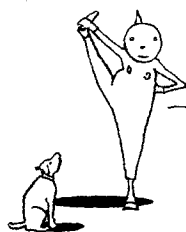
The pillaging of personal experience can give Waugh's fiction a flavor of the *roman à clef*. To read his wartime diaries alongside the trilogy is to find parallels again and again; whole episodes in the trilogy—for instance, a

scene in which trainee officers are instructed in the purchase of meat and how to distinguish cat from rabbit by the number of ribs—were lifted from the diaries. Taken together, the diaries and the novels demonstrate how a novelist tweaks and grooms reality into something more structured and coherent than life as it is lived. Waugh selected, distilled, and enriched his raw material, trawling his wide acquaintance to furnish the cast but then refining and polishing to create the heightened mood and action of fiction. This strategic adjustment of reality is the process of inflation and conflation summed up by Ivy Compton-Burnett: "People in life hardly seem to be definite enough to appear in print. They are not good or bad enough, or clever or stupid enough, or comic or pitiful enough."

Waugh's tetchy and combative personality made him a difficult companion at arms. His reputation with fellow officers and superiors was shaky. A laconic editorial footnote in the diaries quotes a letter from a commanding officer: "Nobody wished to have him ... he was the cause of constant trouble." But what Waugh effectively did, when it came to the fictional translation of his experience, was to bleach himself out of the picture. The trilogy records what he saw and heard and did, but he himself is not here. He stood aside, the grand manipulator conjuring order out of disorder and finding significance in apparent chaos. It is an approach that interestingly reflects that of an odd kind of historian—defiantly biased, unashamedly selective of evidence. And choice of evidence is of course the perquisite of the novelist. Nevertheless, there is a sense in which fiction with as grand a sweep and as idiosyncratic a voice as Waugh's has to be seen as a maverick aspect of historical writing. When I want to hear Britain of the 1940s, I go to these novels—the finest work of fiction in English to emerge from World War II. ▀

ON THE WEB: See www.theatlantic.com/waugh for essays on Evelyn Waugh from The Atlantic's archives.

The Atlantic Monthly (ISSN 0276-9077) is published monthly except for a combined issue in July/August by The Atlantic Monthly Group, 77 N. Washington St., Boston, MA 02114 (617-854-7700). Periodicals postage paid at Boston, MA, Toronto, Ont., and additional mailing offices. Printed in U.S.A. Subscription queries: Atlantic Customer Care, Box 37585, Boone, IA 50037-0585 (or call 800-234-2411). Advertising and Circulation: 200 Madison Ave., 20th floor, NY, NY 10016 (646-695-8500). Subscriptions: one year \$17.94 in the U.S. and poss.; add \$8.00 in Canada, includes GST (123209926); add \$15.00 elsewhere. Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement 0261327. Back issues: send \$7.50 per copy to The Atlantic, Back Issues, 1900 Industrial Park Dr., Federalsburg, MD 21632 (or call 410-754-8219). Vol. 287, No. 2, February 2001. Copyright © 2001, by The Atlantic Monthly Group. All rights reserved. Postmaster: Send address changes to Atlantic Address Change, Box 37585, Boone, IA 50037-0585.



THE PUZZLER

by EMILY COX and HENRY RATHVON

Sweet Sixteen

Numbered Across rows and Down columns each contain two words, clued in order. In each of the sixteen 3 x 3 sections of the grid a five-letter word can be arranged from the four unchecked letters (those directly above, below, and to the sides of a central square) plus a letter in the center. Clues for these "Sweet Sixteen" words are given in random order. The sixteen central-square letters, when read from left to right and top to bottom, tell what the diagram represents. Answers include five proper nouns.

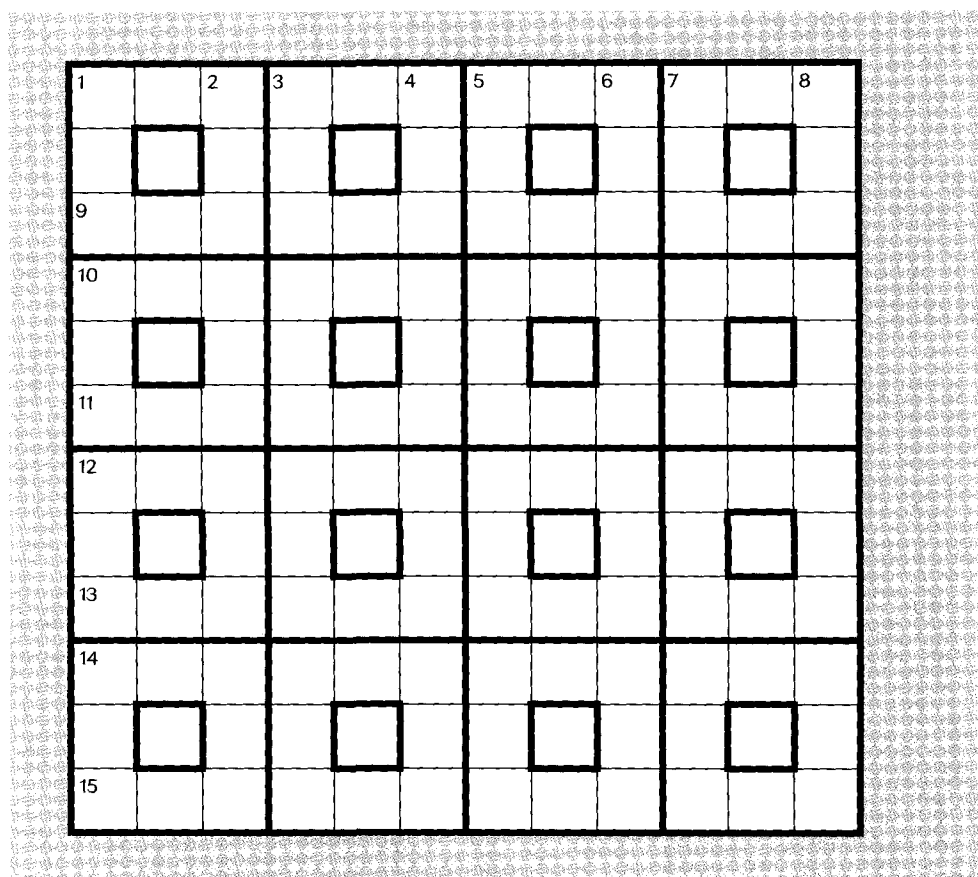
Last month's Puzzler solution is on page 129

ACROSS

1. Urge for a bit of caramel with nuts (7)
Something staked on high percentage (5)
9. Quite within legalities, getting guillotined? (7)
Jazz combo member has restricted the horns (5)
10. "Back bites," in English (4)
Ornaments adjusted in mechanical methods (8)
11. Conservative's extremely careful about a bird (9)
Incomplete box spring (3)
12. Someone chanting for popular skin refresher (7)
Wavy line on a metal fabric (5)
13. Order a red light (5)
The old man has an expert cure for everything (7)
14. Trouble with a tap dancer's first run (4)
Norm & Otis playing checkers (8)
15. Heard big stick bug (5)
Some abused a test for drugs (7)

DOWN

1. Cold comfort in stop (5)
Baddie breaking spy group's bugs (7)
2. Initially split up in a street (2,5)
Maybe I care what a girl might be called (5)

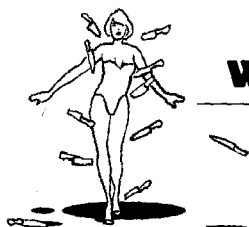


3. Crow relative trails flock of geese (5)
Green mat for each drink (4,3)
4. Material only shot before noon (5)
My people answer about petty officer's arms (7)
5. Pronounced appearance in men (4)
Standard puncture, in a manner of speaking (8)
6. Crude handle belonging to you (6)
I see about Rod Christie (6)
7. Best-ordered exam of a school group? (7)
Author and saint penning bunk? (5)
8. Steamy noise occurs in high school (4)
Container within containers for hemp products (8)
- C. Tank's top, in rough wear and tear
- D. Resting place for fish
- E. Am I in Tex's convertible?
- F. Weight of root announced
- G. Face right, when in spring
- H. Cuts in a forest around new pines
- I. Large island next to a Mediterranean land
- J. Heard low avian call
- K. Censure catcher with mask
- L. Old, according to American works of art
- M. Neighbor carries wheel around
- N. Weirdly, Elvis never died
- O. Period in gym on Thursday
- P. Sweets may dry when hollowed out

SWEET SIXTEEN

- A. Peg's swallowing red gum and orange
- B. Note held by Sting in "King of Thebes"

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving, send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, Mass. 02114.



WORD FUGITIVES

by BARBARA WALLRAFF

A word fugitive is a wanted word or expression that someone has been unable to call to mind. Quite probably no exactly apt term exists—but maybe one should. Those familiar with *The Meaning of Liff* (1983), by Douglas Adams and John Lloyd, or *Sniglets* (1984), by Rich Hall and Friends, may find it helpful to think of word fugitives as empty mental spaces waiting to be filled by neologisms like the ones that appeared in those books. Readers familiar with *Atlantic Unbound* (www.theatlantic.com) may already be acquainted with the word-fugitives idea, which made its debut online. Now readers are invited to submit for this page both word fugitives they seek and neologisms they coin to meet the needs of their word-wanting fellows. The page will appear every other month.

Here are a couple of examples, adapted from the Web, to get the ball rolling.

RECENTLY Mark Peneer, of Somerville, Massachusetts, asked, “Often after I’ve heard of something for the first time—a food, a place, a person—I start hearing about it everywhere. Shouldn’t there be a word for this?”

Certainly there are terms for many other specific psychological phenomena, from *acedia* (spiritual torpor and apathy) to *zoning out* (losing concentration). “In line with the current trend toward pathologizing every possible mental state,” Peter Buchwald, of Akron, Ohio, suggested, “this should be called *attention-surplus disorder*.” Royce Alden, of Coquille, Oregon, coined *neubiquitous*.

Top honors go to Rich Pasenow, of Sacramento, California. “I hate to borrow from French,” he wrote, “but how about *déjà new*?” Appropriately enough, after Pasenow submitted this suggestion on the Web, a version of the phrase turned up elsewhere: *Déjà Nu* is the title of a recent album by the pop-music idol Dion.

KEVIN Taylor, of Boise, Idaho, wrote, “Here’s a phenomenon that cries out for a word to describe it: the state of being amused (irrationally so, it seems to me) by the antics of one’s pets.”

The very existence of the monosyllabic and generic word *pet* implies that English is already way ahead of other languages in the domestic-fauna department; speakers of Romance languages must resort to phrases like *animale prediletto* and *animal de estimação* to get the same idea across. As for a word to convey infatuation with pets, Jim Ennis, of Huntsville, Alabama, came up with “*petaphilia* or *pestaphilia*—depending on your perspective.” Denny Stein, of Balti-



more, Maryland, wrote, “I suppose if I had a bird, it might make me *raptorous*. However, in reality I am *catatonic*.” Glenn Werner, of Pine Bush, New York, wrote, “When one gets particularly engrossed with one’s pet, especially in the presence of others, it’s called being *petantic*.”

Top honors go to Jason Taniguchi and his fellow members of the Toronto, Ontario, Serial Diners Collective (don’t ask), who suggested the frolicsome term *fur-shlugginer*. This is a variant, those who have never been regular readers of *Mad* magazine may be glad to learn, on a Yiddish-sounding word that in Alfred E. Neuman’s lexicon means “crazy.”

THIS month Dillon Teachout, of Norwich, Vermont, writes, “Is there a word for mistakenly written homonyms—your for you’re, and so on?”

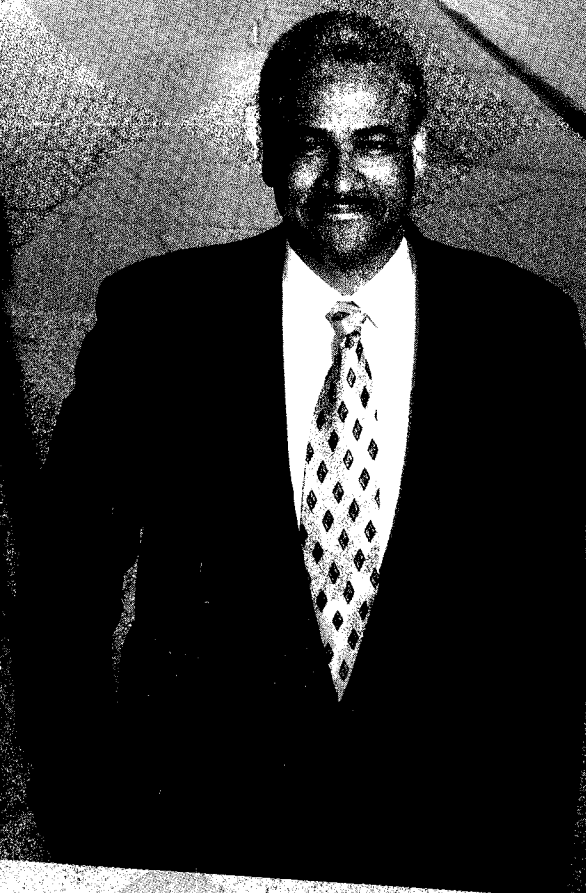
An excellent question. Ever fewer people seem to be able to tell those two, or *its* and *it’s*, or *led* and *lead*, apart.

AND Marcia Pollack, of Kingston, New Jersey, writes, “As you know, the word *hysteria* has its origins in female physiology, and it applies to the manner in which women behave when stressed. The word was probably coined by men, who, I’m sure, found this behavior of women incomprehensible. It has always seemed to me that there should be a word for the way men behave when stressed. I have on a number of occasions found myself strapped in the passenger seat of a car flying down the highway at top speed while the male driver of my car was chasing another driver and screaming, ‘You SOB!’ I am as mystified about this male behavior as men must be about hysterical female behavior.”

Send words that serve Dillon Teachout’s or Marcia Pollack’s purposes to Word Fugitives, The Atlantic Monthly, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, MA 02114 or visit the Word Fugitives page on our Web site, at www.theatlantic.com/fugitives. Submissions must be received by February 28. Use the same addresses to submit word fugitives that you’d like The Atlantic’s help in finding. Letters become the property of Word Fugitives and may be edited.

Readers whose queries are published and those whose coinages are singled out for top honors will each receive, with our thanks, a selection of recent autographed books by Atlantic authors. The next installment’s correspondents will be sent *The Truth About Dogs*, by Stephen Budiansky; *Drowning Ruth*, by Christina Schwarz; and *Word Court*, by Barbara Wallraff.

In 1969, John Jones' territory covered
Main Street, Sycamore and 4th.
Now it's California, Arizona and Utah.



John Jones
UPS Pacific Region Manager

©2001 United Parcel Service of America, Inc.



As well as New Mexico, Idaho and Nevada. Today, he's responsible for nearly 27,000 employees, millions of customers and more than \$2.8 billion in business. Whether delivering packages, or managing one of our largest regions, John has consistently been among the best at everything he's done since 1969. That's how he earned the position he has today. You see, at UPS, how far you can go depends on how hard you're willing to work. How good you are at your job. And what you've accomplished. In other words, everyone at UPS has the same chance for advancement. No matter where they start. To learn more, visit www.community.ups.com

UPS IS PROUD TO SUPPORT BLACK HISTORY MONTH.

PRODUCED BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

OUTBACK



**RUGGED. DEPENDABLE.
WEATHER-RESISTANT.
JUST WHAT YOU'D EXPECT FROM L.L.BEAN.**

Introducing the Outback L.L.Bean Edition from Subaru. Its six powerful cylinders will definitely put a kick in your next trip. And the traction of full-time All-Wheel Drive will help you tackle whatever kind of weather nature throws at you. In other words, you'll be able to go where you want, when you want. Plus, with amenities like leather-trimmed seats and a mahogany and leather steering wheel by Momo, you're going to look great in it. Visit us at www.subaru.com, call 1-800-WANT-AWD or stop in for a test-drive. The Outback L.L.Bean Edition. It's exactly what you'd expect from two authorities in outdoor adventure.

SUBARU 

The Beauty of All-Wheel Drive

The ABC's of Safety: Air bags. Buckle up. Children in back.